

Understanding Social and Emotional Learning in Elementary Schools:

A Guide for Teachers, Administrators, and Parents

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Abstract

Caring for the mental health and well-being of students in order to increase student academic success is gaining more attention from schools in recent years. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a way educators are supporting the social and emotional well-being of students. SEL seeks to give students the tools and strategies they need to become self-aware, recognize and manage their emotions, make responsible decisions, and establish relationships with others. This research examined SEL and students' well-being, the relation between brain-based learning and social-emotional skills, and existing SEL programs. Although the research has found that SEL is directly related to students' academic achievement, many educators and school communities are unaware of this positive impact of SEL on student success. A handbook presented here titled *A Beginner's Guide to Teaching Social and Emotional Learning: A Handbook for Teachers, Administrators, and Parents*, was created with the intention of introducing the relevant classroom activities that promote a positive school environment in which students may benefit socially, emotionally, and academically.

Keywords: Social emotional learning, mindfulness, elementary, handbook, academic success

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Recent research on bullying, substance abuse, suicide, and dropout rates are on the rise suggests that children of today are facing numerous situations that negatively impact their social, emotional, and academic development, consequently, affecting their behaviour and happiness (Shatkin, 2015). It has been found that schools that focus on both academics and social and emotional competence also increase their students' capabilities to achieve academic success (Casella & Burstyn, 2002; Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Hamre & Pianta, 2005). Social and emotional learning (SEL) involves teaching children the necessary skills they need for social awareness, self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills (CASEL, 2016). SEL has been found to provide a positive system of support for students, increasing their happiness, behaviour, academic skills, and their overall well-being. Studies have revealed that SEL (a) increases achievement levels of students by 11%; (b) improves students' social behaviours towards others through kindness, sharing, and empathy; (c) changes students' outlook on school; and (d) decreases student levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Durlak et al., 2010; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Mindess, Chen, & Brenner, 2008).

One of the important cognitive abilities in regulating emotions is the neurological process known as executive function (EF). EF is the ability to control and coordinate thoughts and behaviour (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). It is sometimes referred to as the cognitive control of the brain, or social cognition, and has the role in selecting attention, decision-making, and inhibiting impulses (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). For example, recognizing social cues, understanding others' emotions and meaning,

deciding what is an appropriate response, and acting on this decision is the result of proper EF (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). Proper EF is developed through strong social and emotional skills (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). However, many teachers are unable to support the social and emotional needs of their students due to their lack of understanding the components of the brain and how teaching with the brain in mind can influence student learning (Powell, 2000). According to the Canadian Teachers' Federation (2012), when surveyed, approximately 87% of teachers believe there is a lack of teacher training when it comes to dealing with the social, emotional, and behavioural well-being of students. In addition, 70% of teachers reported that they had not received any professional development related to mental health (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2012). Children show decreased levels of productive behaviour and performance when their teachers are unable to effectively manage the social and emotional challenges within their classroom (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). This leads to increases in student misbehavior, a deterioration of the classroom climate, and emotionally exhausted teachers (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Thus, the need to inform teachers about the influence of brain-based research on learning and student behaviour is vital for supporting the social and emotional needs of students.

This study explored and connected neuroscience findings to classroom instructions, and provided suggestions to improve present instructional approaches chosen to manage student behaviour. This study also explored instructional approaches such as mindful learning and SEL strategies, as approaches to learning that increase students' social, emotional, and behavioural skills, and may result in increases in student academic achievement.

Background of the Problem and Statement of the Problem Situation

Over the last 20 years, research has been suggesting children's socioemotional proficiency leads to early school success; however, early childhood professionals continue to emphasize cognitive achievement, literacy, and numeracy over children's socioemotional competence for student well-being and school success (Aber, Jones, & Cohen, 2000; McClelland, Morrison, & Holmes, 2000; Rosenthal & Gatt, 2010). This attitude is due to the fact that teacher training provides teachers with knowledge and skills to promote language and cognitive achievement, while the development of socioemotional skills are usually left to the influence of the home environment (Rosenthal & Gatt, 2010). As a result, teachers are inadequately prepared for their role in supporting the socioemotional development of their students, leaving many students with learning disorders and mental health issues neglected (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2012). Therefore, more resources for teachers on supporting the social and emotional development of students would be beneficial.

It is estimated that 10-20% of Canadian youth are affected by a mental illness or disorder (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2015), and there is a growing number of school-aged children who experience social, emotional, and behavioural problems that impact their school success and interpersonal relationships (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2015; Schwean & Rodger, 2013). If childhood mental health issues are not addressed effectively, they may lead to difficulties in adulthood such as job loss, family problems, suicide, and criminal activities (Schwean & Rodger, 2013). Since teachers spend a significant amount of time with children during their childhood, they play an important role in facilitating the emotional well-being and social skills of children. The

good news is Canadian teachers are beginning to show interest in learning more about mental health and how to effectively support students manage their emotional needs. However, they are still not receiving adequate training on how to recognize mental health problems and how to prevent mental health issues; thus, they are limited with what they can do to support students both mentally and academically (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2012).

Education in Ontario is organized in helping students academically by providing students, especially those with learning disabilities (LD) or mental health issues, with an Individual Educational Plan (IEP; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004). The IEP lists academic adaptations and accommodations for teachers to provide these students with, for example, allowing students more time to complete work, relocating them to a different setting with fewer distractions, and allowing students to use technology when necessary. The idea is to adapt the learning environment for these students to reduce anxiety and stress levels. However, these supports merely assist the students but do not attempt to fix their learning disability/mental illness, nor do they attend to any nonacademic issues these students may have such as poor social skills. Students with certain LDs, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorder, and expressive language disorder, and students with mental health issues, such as anxiety or depression, often struggle with social and emotional skills (Shatkin, 2015). Therefore, while they may be supported academically with the help of an IEP, they may be left on their own when it comes to social and emotional support and, as a result, they are unable to reach their full potential. SEL reduces the amount of misbehaviours in the classroom, leaving teachers with more energy to stay focused on teaching rather than discipline

(Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The implementation of SEL in the classroom would help to reduce stress and anxiety of these students by teaching them how to express themselves, interact with peers, and ask for help when necessary; thereby helping these students in reaching their full potential.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this project is to raise awareness to educators about the importance of SEL. By providing a comprehensive analysis of the research on SEL, brain development, and the emotions of the mind, educators will be provided with the information that outlines the significance of supporting student social-emotional competence and its relationship to early school success. It will (a) define SEL for educators; (b) provide comprehensive, research-based evidence of the importance of positive social and emotional development; and (c) suggest strategies for supporting students' socioemotional competences in order to create opportunities for students to excel both academically and socially in and outside of the classroom.

This project will consider a theoretical framework based on Gardner's (1983) Multiple Intelligences, Goleman's (1995) Emotional Intelligence, and Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory. The research objectives for the handbook were framed to provide educators with effective strategies they can use to support social and emotional learning in their classroom.

The three main research objectives of the handbook are:

1. Increase the awareness about brain-based learning and the importance of the development of social-emotional skills in students for their academic success and their overall well-being.

2. Provide teachers with information about the available SEL programs and their effectiveness in promoting self-regulation, and developing a positive school environment that benefits all students.
3. Provide educators with relevant classroom activities for developing social-emotional skills necessary for students' academic achievement and their overall well-being.

Rationale

Teacher training focuses on providing teachers with the knowledge and skills to promote language and cognitive achievement but fails to prepare teachers in supporting the social and emotional needs of students (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2012).

Although most teachers are aware of the importance of supporting students' social and emotional needs and its influence on student academics, they are not well-equipped to provide their students with the adequate support.

The rationale for this project is to promote the improvement of best practices of social-emotional learning in education by adding to existing research and providing teachers with a resource that explains social and emotional learning. It also aims to help educators in their professional development as they seek to support the differing needs of their students and guide them on the path to success.

Theoretical Framework

This project is guided by three psychological and socioecological models:

Gardner's (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences, Goleman's (1995) Theory of Emotional Intelligences, and Bandura's (19787) Social Learning Theory. Together, these three theories provide the foundation for understanding the important role teachers have

in supporting the social and emotional well-being of their students and facilitating social and emotional learning in their classrooms.

Interest in supporting students' social and emotional learning is inspired from Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983). Gardner proposed that individuals differ in the way they understand new concepts, analyze, and solve problems; thus, he began to challenge the education system that assumes everyone learns in a uniform way (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). Gardner also suggested that there is too much focus on I.Q. scores as important for success in school and recognized that there are several different types of intelligences that should also be considered for school success (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). Gardner came up with seven multiple intelligences, which have now been expanded to nine intelligences: verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/special, musical/rhythmic, bodily/kinaesthetic, naturalist, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and existential (Razmjoo, 2008).

It is because of these different intelligences that educators were encouraged to be mindful of the different way students learn and start to accommodate for these different types of learners (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). Social and emotional learning is about supporting the different learners in the classroom and providing students with the skills they need to be successful in life (Elias, 2006; Zhai, Cybele Raver, & Jones, 2015; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). These skills include understanding one's self, managing one's emotions and behaviours, making responsible decision-making, understanding others, building relationships, and learning to be socially aware (CASEL, 2016). Two of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, intrapersonal intelligence and interpersonal intelligence, focus on the importance of these specific life skills (Razmjoo,

2008). Therefore, understanding Gardner's (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences allows educators to better support students and ensures they gain the necessary skills to succeed in life.

Social and emotional learning is also inspired by Daniel Goleman's Theory of Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004; Zins et al., 2004). Goleman describes emotional intelligence as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (as cited in Mayer et al., 2004, p. 189). Similar to Gardner's intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences, emotional intelligence involves the ability to recognize emotions, understand emotions, and to regulate emotions in order to solve problems and regulate behaviour (Mayer et al., 2004). Research has found that students with high emotional intelligence are able to cope better with the demands of their courses, have a higher level of confidence in their abilities and, as a result, outperform students with low emotional intelligence (Petrides, Frederickson, & Furnham, 2004). SEL instruction may be considered an extension of emotional intelligence since it also promotes regulation of emotions while also promoting relationship, social awareness, and responsible decision-making skills (CASEL, 2016).

According to Albert Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, learning is a cognitive process that takes place in social situations through observation, imitation, and modeling. In other words, children adapt their behaviours based on the actions of those around them and by the rewards and punishments given. Research in neuroscience has linked mirror neurons as the reasoning behind this social learning behaviour. Mirror neurons activate neurons in the brain when an individual observes another perform an

action as if they themselves were the one performing the action (Knoblich & Sebanz, 2006). This allows the individual to simulate the observed action implicitly and reproduce the action later (Knoblich & Sebanz, 2006). By establishing a classroom that models positive behaviours and provides opportunities for interactive learning, we can influence the thinking, skills, and behaviours of students; thus allowing students to develop the social and emotional skills they require for success.

Importance of the Study

Leslie Hart (1983) argues that “teaching without an awareness of how the brain learns, is like designing a glove with no sense of what a hand looks like – its shape, how it moves” (p. 10). In other words, if classrooms are to be a place for learning, then the brain, “the organ of learning” (Hart, 1983, p. 10), must be understood and accommodated. Currently, teacher education programs do not effectively train teachers to integrate brain research into their classrooms (Ansari & Coch, 2006; Canadian Teachers’ Federation, 2012; Morton, 2014). There appears to be a lack of communication between neuroscientists and educators on applying cognitive neuroscience evidence to education (Ansari & Coch, 2006). However, research shows that teachers, who are prepared with the knowledge of how the brain works, have the incentive and motivation to apply their findings to the classroom, which can improve the learning experience for their students (Willis, 2015). This project will allow opportunities for educators to learn, examine, and adapt their teaching skills to support SEL pedagogical principles, and provide them with effective classroom strategies to support SEL based on brain-based research.

Overview

This project is designed to display the relevant research on SEL found by the researcher in order to develop and organize a handbook. This first chapter introduces the reader to the background and purpose of the study, as well as the theoretical framework for which this study was based upon. Chapter Two explores the available research related to the main topic of SEL. It outlines the significance of social and emotional skills, its connection to mental health, the importance of teaching with the brain in mind, and introduces the concept of mindfulness. This second chapter concludes by examining successful mindful, social, and emotional learning programs, as well as any barriers and challenges of SEL. Chapter Three indicates the methodology, the development process in creating the handbook, as well as the rationale and implementation of the handbook. Chapter Four is the handbook: *A Beginners Guide to Teaching Social and Emotional Learning: A Handbook for Elementary Teachers, Administrators and Parents*. Chapter Five discusses the lessons learned from this study, the limitations of the study, and the next steps of the project.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter Two, I begin by describing the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL) in schools. I then make connections to SEL and student mental health, and what it means to teach with "The Brain in Mind" using mindfulness. From there, I review several mindful programs and examine components of successful SEL programs. Next, I consider barriers and challenges that educators may face when implementing SEL programs. I conclude the chapter by summarizing key learning and stating the influence of this study within the existing research.

The Importance of Social and Emotional Skills

SEL is about teaching children the skills they need to grow into independent and successful citizens in society (Graczyk et. al., 2000). SEL is a learning approach which seeks to teach students (a) how to set positive goals, (b) how to behave in an ethical and responsible manner, (c) how to increase motivations, (d) how to reduce/prevent violent disruptions, (e) how to manage challenging situations in an effective and positive manner, and (f) how to establish positive relationships with peers and adults (Cohen, 1999; Desai, Karahalios, Persuad, & Reker, 2014; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004).

The Collaborative for Social Emotional Learning (2016) has distinguished five core components schools must focus on when promoting SEL in schools:

- Self-Awareness: identifying and recognizing emotions, recognizing strengths, needs, values, understanding for one's behaviour.
- Self-Management: regulating emotions, thoughts, behaviours, setting goals.
- Responsible Decision-Making: problem identification and problem-solving, evaluating and reflecting, social and ethical consideration.

- Relationship Skills: communication, social engagement, working cooperatively, establishing and maintaining healthy relationships.
- Social Awareness: perspective taking, difference recognition, empathy for others, respect for others.

Students who have acquired these skills, attitudes and behaviours have been found to (a) be more engaged in school, (b) achieve better grades, and (c) be less likely to be involved in risky behaviour (CASEL, 2016). Not only are these students more likely to be successful in school, but they are also more likely to develop friendships, initiate social exchanges with others, display empathy, and succeed in work situations (Flair, 2013; Waajid, Garner, & Owen, 2013).

Research reveals that social skills are first established during infancy and are influenced by a child's environment (Wu, Hursh, Walls, Stack Jr., & Lin, 2012). It is during the first few years when babies learn people respond to their communication cues, whether it is a cry or smile, and, as a result, babies begin to adapt their communications to attain the response they want others to give (Wu et al., 2012). As children get older, they start to interact with other children, playing, sharing, praising, and supporting one another. The more positive experiences children have with their playmates, the more familiar and comfortable they will be with engaging in social interactions (Wu et al., 2012).

According to Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, children also develop their social skills by observing others interact with one another, the outcome of that interaction, and then begin to imitate that behaviour in order to get that same outcome. This behaviour is due to activation of mirror neurons in the brain as described in Chapter

One. Bandura breaks his Social Learning Theory into four processes: (a) attention - when the child sees a role model demonstrating a type of behaviour, (b) retention - remembering the model's behaviour, (c) motivation - providing a good reason for copying the behaviour, and (d) reproduction - copying the behaviour (Bandura, 1977). To ensure students develop strong social skills, teachers should model positive behaviour by following the four processes of Bandura's Social Learning Theory. This means providing opportunities for students to practice positive behaviour so they are eventually motivated to repeat this positive behaviour on their own, enhancing their social skills.

While social skills are important for student achievement, teachers should also be promoting regulation of emotional skills. Teachers who are aware of, understand, and promote regulation of emotions have been linked to classroom climates that promote active instructional engagement (Waajid et al., 2013). These teachers encourage students to develop a sense of self-regulation and strong social skills and, as a result, these students, rather than act on their emotions, learn to control their behaviour (Elliott & Gresham, 1987). Teachers then spend less time on classroom management and more time on instructional activities. Not only are these teachers able to emphasis learning, but they are less likely to be involved in conflicts with students with good behaviours (Cook, Senders, & Torgerson, 1995), thus, improving their relationship with students. Therefore, social skills not only promote active instructional engagement, but also allow teachers to establish more positive relationships with their students.

Students who have positive relationships with both their teachers and peers have been linked to positive academic performance, and have been found to achieve high marks on standardized tests (Durlak et al., 2010). On the other hand, students displaying

antisocial behaviour are frequently associated with poor academic outcomes (Hawkins, Kosterman, Catalano, Hill, & Abbott, 2008). Research has also indicated that students who are dealing with serious emotional troubles often struggle with their academic performance in school (Aviles, Anderson, & Davila, 2006). A study by Hamre and Pianta (2005) found that students who lack emotional and social support in the classroom have significantly lower academic and social skills. These students attain lower grades than those with disabilities (Hamre & Pianta, 2005). It, therefore, becomes evident that social-emotional functioning and academic performance are correlated. Hamre and Pianta's study reveals that children who do not acquire healthy social and emotional skills are at a higher risk of falling behind in school and are more likely to display behavioural, emotional, academic, and social development problems. Students who are able to recognize and control their emotions are more likely to succeed on their own when challenges arise both in and outside of the classroom.

Another benefit of learning social skills is described in the report by National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2007), which indicates that a child's emotional well-being, and social competence can be linked to brain development and cognitive abilities (Mindess et al., 2008). This report explains that language learning is acquired by the ability to differentiate sounds and ability to link meaning to words; this process is possible through the meaningful social interaction (Mindess et al., 2008). Thus, obtaining social skills at a young age will allow students to develop a wider range of vocabulary, perform better academically, and interact positively with others.

Research by Aviles et al. (2006) has found that students with serious emotional issues tend to misbehave and become verbally or physically aggressive towards peers

and/or teachers. This is influenced by their inability to control their emotions, causing them to act out verbally or physically due to their frustrations in trying to learn new concepts/skills or interact with peers. This may result in a suspension, or expulsion, which makes students miss school, and can directly affect their academic achievement (Aviles et al., 2006). These same students are also often misplaced in special education classes due to these aggressive behaviours, which further removes them from interacting with peers for normal social developmental (Aviles et al., 2006). In addition, it is reported that 22% of these students who show aggression and social-emotional disturbances in school are arrested before graduating high school, while 58% are arrested within 5 years of graduation (Chesapeake Institute, 1994). These findings validate the importance of identifying children who lack social and emotional competence at a young age in order to support their academic progress, social development, and public social behaviour both in and outside of school.

The violence prevention program initiated by the Syracuse University Violence Prevention Project was integrated into a New York school and consisted of a prosocial skills and anger management course, and incorporated conflict resolution strategies into the daily academic curriculum of the school (Casella & Burstyn, 2002). Results of this program reveal that by integrating social and emotional learning skills into the classroom, students are less violent and exhibit pro-social behaviour and, as a result, there is an increase in academic achievements (Casella & Burstyn, 2002). One teacher shared that incorporating pro-social objectives in the classroom lead to “less fights, less disruption, more teaching, more learning” (Casella & Burstyn, 2002, p. 88). By teaching pro-social and emotional skills, students with social emotional disturbances are not only improving

their own learning experience but also improving the learning experience of their peers and teachers.

Connection to Mental Health

Children may exhibit a range of social and emotional problems that affect their school performance and overall well-being (Casella & Burstyn, 2002; Hamre & Pianta, 2005). These problems can increase the risk of students developing clinical mental health disorders (Schwean & Roger, 2013). Recently in Canada, attention to mental health and mental health support has been increasing (Schwean & Roger, 2013). According to statistics from recent studies, mental health problems are becoming the biggest problem faced by Canadian children and youth today (Schwean & Roger, 2013; Waddell, McEwan, Shepherd, Offord & Hua, 2005). Mental health disorders affect 10-20% of Canadian youth, which works out to be approximately four to six children in a class of 30 students that are affected by mental health problems in Canada (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2015; Schwean & Roger, 2013).

Mental health is considered a crucial part to a person's overall health (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2012; Schwean & Roger, 2013). It is described as the ability to successfully perform mental functions in a productive manner, establish fulfilling relationships with others, and "the ability to adapt to change and cope with adversity" (Ottawa-Carlton District School Board, 2012, p. 2). This is different to mental illness, which refers to the diseases of the mind outlined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-5; 2013). The criteria for the diagnosis for each mental illness are listed in the DSM-5. Some prevalent mental illnesses that commonly affect Canadian children are depression, anxiety, and attention

deficit hyperactivity disorder (Epkins & Heckler, 2011; Shatkin, 2015). On the other hand, mental health problems refer to symptoms that do not meet the detailed criteria for mental illnesses in the DSM-5 (OCDSB, 2012). Mental health problems often reflect normal reactions to life stresses such as feeling anxious before writing a test (OCDSB, 2012). However, these reactions can become an issue when they begin to impair daily functioning and match the signs and symptoms of mental illness (OCDSB, 2012). For instance, students who are constantly exposed to stressful situations in school and are not able to adapt to the situation may only become more stressed and anxious over time, resulting in poor academic performance and overall health.

In order to reduce the number of children with mental health issues, schools are being encouraged to provide support for students. MHCC published Canada's first mental health strategy in 2012, *Changing Direction, Changing Lives*, in which six key strategies for improving mental health are suggested. Promoting mental health in environments that are repeatedly visited, such as schools, is one of these strategies (MHCC, 2012). Since schools are able to reach out to large numbers of children, it makes sense as to why they are often considered the best places to address the mental health needs of students. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (2008), also known as CASEL, explains:

While schools are primarily concerned with education, mental health is essential to learning as well as to social and emotional development. Because of this important interplay between emotional health and school success, schools must be partners in the mental health care of our children. (p. 1)

There is a relationship between SEL and mental health; therefore, by including programs in schools that focus on helping students develop strong social and emotional skills, schools will be able to create a safe and caring school climate that promotes the mental health of all children.

Implementing SEL programming in all classrooms is beneficial for all students, no matter the predetermined risk of mental health issues. SEL programming reduces the number of students who require early intervention because it provides them with the skills they need to address life's challenges and allows teachers to manage their classrooms in ways that promote interest and engagement (CASEL, 2008). SEL programming also prepares the classmates of the students with special needs to be "more empathic, compassionate, supportive, and effective in interactions with them" (CASEL, 2008, p. 3). Thus, SEL not only helps to reduce mental health issues but it provides students with the skills they need to be successful learners in school and to effectively interact with their classmates and teachers.

Teachers have a lot of responsibility; between preparing lesson plans, teaching classes and evaluating student progress, the psychological needs of the students have often been overlooked and neglected (Aber et al., 2000; McClelland et al., 2000; Rosenthal & Gatt, 2010). However, due to the recent attention and concern about mental well-being among today's children and youth, Ontario teachers are being encouraged to implement social emotional learning in their classrooms (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014; Schwean & Roger, 2013). A recently published document titled *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* (OME, 2014) describes well-being as part of the four core principles of education in Ontario. This document confirms

the importance of supporting student well-being; however, it lacks any direction on how to promote student well-being.

Teaching with the Brain in Mind

Understanding the connection between education and the mind is essential for promoting student well-being and SEL. Einstein has said, “Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think” (as cited in Isaacson, 2007, p. 1080). Therefore, educators must understand how the brain works and adapt their teaching methods to better support student brain development in order to promote student well-being in the classroom. Currently, no study has been able to come to an agreement about the application of brain research to education; however, the topic of the brain is being researched more frequently in educational journals due to its potential to enhance the educational process (Powell, 2000). The next few paragraphs will discuss the relationship between the brain and education through an examination of the components of the developing mind, the study of the social brain, multiple intelligences, and the emotional mind. Through the use of Brain-Targeted Teaching Model, I will also describe how teachers can implement brain research in the classroom.

Components of the Developing Mind

The educational learning experience for students is naturally impacted by the educational approach chosen by the teacher. According to Barry (2006), educators who choose an approach that accommodates for the developing brains of students are more likely to get students to learn and behave as they want them to. Barry explains that there are four different components of memory development: capacity (how much children can hold in their memory), strategies (schemes a child has developed to improve or extend

memory), knowledge base (everything in the child's memory), and metamemory (awareness of one's own memory abilities). By gaining an understanding of each of these components, teachers can gain insight as to why a student may be misbehaving and, as a result, make adjustments to their teaching to help the students develop the social and emotional skills they may be lacking.

To demonstrate how understanding brain development and memory allows teachers to better support students in developing their social and emotional skills, we can consider the following situation. A teacher instructing students by saying "Time to clean up" sounds like a simple short command when in reality it may be several commands at once and, thus, overwhelms a young child's memory capacity. Barry (2006) explains that young children have a difficult time following several commands at once and states that adults must break up commands into shorter commands. These students do not yet know how to self-manage or make responsible decisions, skills that are part of social and emotional development (CASEL, 2016), and must be given more direction for what "clean up" actually means. "Clean up the play-doh" followed by "Put the puzzles in the box" are more specific commands and match the child's developing memory capacity (Barry, 2006). Over time these children will learn that "Time to clean up" means clean up the entire play area including the play-doh and puzzles, but they need to be given the opportunity to do so and develop these skills. This is one example of how understanding children's memory development can help teachers choose instructional approaches that maintain control of student behaviour to better support SEL.

The Social Brain

Applying neuroscience findings to the classroom (i.e., the social brain), can directly improve the educational experience for both teachers and students. Humans' natural tendency to keep track of other people's beliefs and to make sense of their own as well as other people's motives, goals, thoughts, feelings, and dispositions is referred to as the social brain (Lieberman, 2012). This is very similar to the goals of social and emotional learning where students learn self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills (CASEL, 2016). Our social tendencies can be utilized to improve learning when educational concepts and processes are made more social; however, classroom education does not currently support the social brain's natural tendencies to socialize (Lieberman, 2012). For instance, rather than learning about historical events from a list of facts, retention of these events would be improved if presented as historical narratives. The brain is able to use the social memory to relate to the emotions as well as make sense of the motives and feelings of those involved in these historical events when presented as a narrative (Lieberman, 2012). This allows students to make personal connections to the information presented and, therefore, the brain moves this new information from working memory into long-term memory, improving students' ability to remember the content (Yilmaz, 2011). A second way to support the social brain involves focusing less on grammatical rules that need to be memorized in English class, and focussing more on general communication skills. . Directing the learning to focus more on how others will perceive a piece of work will enhance the learning and writing process because it allows individuals to take into consideration how others will experience their work when they read it (Lieberman, 2012). The brain is wired to be social (Lieberman,

2012), therefore, the educational learning experience for students may be improved by changing education from a content based system to a system that focuses more on social aspects of the brain.

Multiple Intelligences

Recognizing that students learn and excel in a variety of ways is another important notion for teachers to understand when incorporating SEL in their classroom. SEL focuses on providing students with the life skills they need to be successful (Elias, 2006; Zins et al., 2004). In order to do this, educators must recognize the different ways their students learn and accommodate their teaching to reflect the learning style of their students. Gardner's (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences, described in Chapter One, states that individuals differ in the way they understand new concepts, analyse, and solve problems (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). Gardner's seven, which has been extended into nine multiple intelligences, include: verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/special, musical/rhythmic, bodily/kinaesthetic, naturalist, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and existential (See Figure 1) (Razmjo, 2008). Gardner explains that intelligence is not controlled by one part of the brain, but instead by multiple parts of the brain; thus, humans have different skills and abilities and may excel in certain skills more than others (Bas, 2016). Teachers are encouraged to be mindful of the different way students learn and to provide a variety of activities and instructional methods that meet the needs of these different types of learners (Gardner & Hatch, 1989).

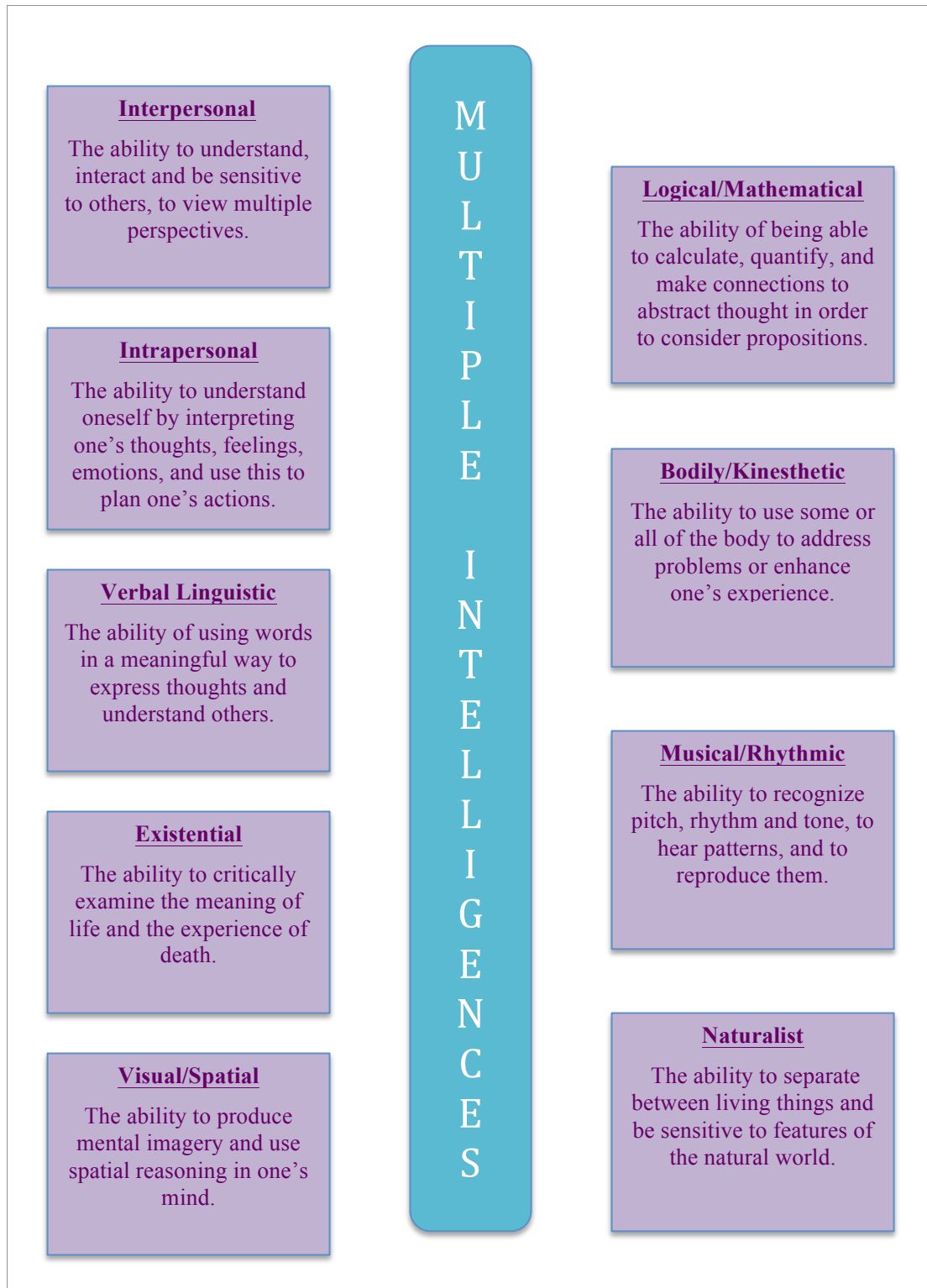


Figure 1. Categories of intelligence types (Razmjo, 2008).

Incorporating multiple intelligence-based instruction also appears to help educators increase student engagement and participation, resulting in increased SEL skills and academic achievement for students. Abdi, Laei, and Ahmadyan (2013) explain that students become engaged and invested in the learning process when they participate in a variety of learning experiences. They are able to find their strengths and become more socially and emotionally competent in their own learning. Furthermore, students have been found to participate more often and retain more knowledge when they are given the opportunity to use their strengths in the learning process; they have also been found to develop a more complex understanding of the material (Abdi et al., 2013). Therefore, in order for teachers to successfully teach SEL skills, teachers must design lessons that offer a variety of learning opportunities for the different type of learners in their classroom.

Focusing on all intelligences is good for increasing engagement and participation overall. However, intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences are the most beneficial to developing SEL skills. Intrapersonal intelligence focuses on understanding of the self and knowing one's abilities and limits (Razmjoo, 2008). Teachers who focus on intrapersonal intelligence will help students develop specific aspects of SEL such as self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2016). Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand other people (Razmjoo, 2008). Teachers who focus on interpersonal intelligence will help students develop specific aspects of SEL such as social awareness and relationship skills (CASEL, 2016). Creating lessons and activities that focus specifically on intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences will help provide

students with the SEL skills they need to be successful in life (Elias, 2006; Zins et al., 2004).

Emotions and the Mind

Learning about the emotions students feel in the classroom may also help teachers to better support social and emotional learning (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Powell, 2000). For instance, fear is often an emotion that prevents students from performing their best, especially the fear of making mistakes in the classroom (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Research explains that students who are highly concerned about the impressions that others form based on their performance, may refrain from classroom participation due to this fear of making mistakes (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). These students are never satisfied with what they accomplish and have lower self-confidence as a result of their fear of what others think and their fixation with perfectionism (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Teachers often support students who try hard not to make mistakes, perceiving this as a sign of a dedicated and motivated student who enjoys learning (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). However, research reveals that this may not be the best approach as an educator, and can actually contribute to lower self-esteem and lower achievement levels of students (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Instead, teachers should be helping students realize the value of their efforts and to not be afraid to make mistakes as they learn. By understanding the impact a student's emotion can have on learning, educators will be able to reflect on their own interactions with students to ensure they are effectively promoting student success.

It is also important for students to be able to recognize and regulate their own emotions. Goleman's Theory of Emotional Intelligence is defined as the ability to

understand one's own feelings and emotions and how they impact thinking and behaviour (Goleman, 1995; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000). Emotional Intelligence involves recognizing an emotional expression, understanding and analysing emotional information, and regulating emotions in a situation (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). The problem is students typically have difficulty expressing their feelings, display low self-esteem, and have poor communication, which result in a significant amount of emotional pain, misbehaviour, and low academic achievement (Lewkowicz, 2007). In order to guide students in developing social and emotional intelligence, teachers need to focus on helping students to recognize their own emotions and thoughts, as well as others' feelings and emotions, and how it influences their behaviour (Durlak et al., 2010). Two of SEL's core components are teaching students to become self-aware of their feelings and to self-manage their behaviours (CASEL, 2016). SEL seeks to help students develop emotional, social, and life skills necessary for making effective choices and becoming confident, engaged learners (Lewkowicz, 2007).

The Brain-Targeted Teaching Model

How are teachers to effectively integrate neuroscience research in the classroom? Hardiman (2010) answers this question by describing what he calls The Brain-Targeted Teaching Model. This model acts as a guideline for teachers to integrate brain-based knowledge into classroom instruction. There are six simple stages or targets in Hardiman's model that teachers can use on a daily basis.

The first stage of the Brain-Targeted Teaching Model focuses on the emotional climate for learning (Hardiman, 2010, p. 2). The target of this stage is to establish a positive emotional climate in order to support high levels of learning. A child who is

placed in a stressful environment will have a difficult time moving new information into the long-term memory due to how the brain processes information. Neuroscience research explains that new information is first processed by the emotional centre of the brain, the limbic system, before being processed by the cognitive centre (Hardiman, 2010). In other words, students first process information with their emotions and can have difficulty learning when experiencing a negative emotion in their life. It may be difficult for teachers to control all factors of stress in a child's life; however, by minimizing stress in the classroom, teachers can promote a more positive emotional experience, which results in increased memory function and better learning experiences (Hardiman, 2010). Positive experiences allow the brain to produce neurotransmitters (chemicals) that can contribute to long-term memory (Hardiman, 2010). Integrating the arts into multiple subjects is a simple way for teachers to establish a positive emotional experience in the classroom. Through visual and performing arts, children are able to express and respond to their emotions in a fun and engaging way (Hardiman, 2010). Therefore, understanding the importance of teaching students to recognize and manage their emotions, as well as to connect emotionally to the content, educators will be able to establish a supportive learning climate for their students.

The second stage of Hardiman's (2010) Brain-Targeted Teaching Model is establishing the physical learning environment (p. 3). Research has found that when there is a lack of novelty in the room, children are more likely to be off task (Hardiman, 2010). In order for children to remain engaged, the brain needs to constantly be active in scanning the surrounding environment. Thus, thinking about how to plan the physical learning environment is important for increasing student focus and learning (Hardiman,

2010). One way for educators to provide students with enough stimulation that keeps their brains actively engaged throughout the school year is by decorating the classroom with student work and continually changing what is posted on bulletin boards for every new unit.

The third stage of the Brain-Targeted Teaching Model is designing the learning experience (Hardiman, 2010, p. 4) in a way that supports the brain's natural learning systems. Neuroscientists have stated that the brain likes to categorize new information so that it can create patterns of thinking and understanding (Hardiman, 2010). Therefore, teachers should be using concept maps, charts, and graphic organizers to aid students in connecting concepts within the unit as well as to the big picture concept at the end of the unit.

The fourth stage of the Brain-Targeted Teaching Model is mastery of skills, content, and concepts (Hardiman, 2010, p. 5). This stage pushes teachers to provide students with time to review content and concepts, as well as to practice these new skills, in order for the knowledge and skills developed to move into the long-term memory. The transfer of information from short-term, to working, to long-term memory is necessary for student success (Hardiman, 2010). Educators who allow students to interact with content, concepts, and their skills in multiple ways not only promote long-term memory but also allow students to make meaningful connections to their new knowledge.

The fifth stage of the Brain-Targeted Teaching Model is extending and applying knowledge (Hardiman, 2010, p. 7). Neuroscientists have found that engaging in higher-order thinking and problem-solving requires the brain to use multiple systems of retrieval (Hardiman, 2010). This process allows students to utilize the content, skills, and

processes they have learned and apply them to real-world situations. This means that in order to help students to become higher-order thinkers, problem solvers, and lifelong learners, teachers should include activities that encourage students to analyse different perspectives, make comparisons, investigate, and design experiments.

The sixth stage of the Brain-Targeted Teaching Model is evaluating learning (Hardiman, 2010, p. 8). According to neuroscience research, receiving immediate feedback after an evaluation enhances learning and memory (Hardiman, 2010). Utilizing an assortment of grading tools to provide students with feedback right after a performance allows students to make adjustments while the content is still pertinent in their minds.

All of these Brain-Targeted stages reveal how educators can implement neurological science to support student learning. Understanding how the brain thinks and learns allows teachers to implement strategies that not only supports the natural thinking and learning of the brain, but it also promotes social and emotional learning through the type of positive environment and classroom interactions teachers are creating for the students. The Brain-Targeted stages are an effective and easy way for teachers to make learning more fun and interactive for their students as they develop the social and emotional skills necessary to become lifelong learners.

The Brain and Mindfulness

Learning how the brain works allows teachers to enhance the learning process; however, when children learn about the science for how their brain works and how it influences their thinking, emotions, and behaviour, they gain control over their choices and the actions they make in the classroom (The Hawn Foundation, 2011). By learning

about the connection between what they are thinking, feeling, and acting, children develop the capability to make more mindful choices. Rather than reacting to a situation, they learn to pause and think about how they should react. Thus, they develop self-regulation, which results in better focus in school and better relationships with others, and enriches their self-awareness and self-control (The Hawn Foundation, 2011), which are all aspects of SEL. This process of helping children to understand their brain so that they can better understand their emotions and improve their behaviours is referred to as mindful awareness, a process of relaxation and meditation (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Relaxation and meditation have been found to not only improve academic performance, research has found that it is an effective tool for teachers to use in their classrooms as it helps to lessen anxiety, increase self-esteem and concentration, and promote social skills among students, especially those with high anxiety or learning disabilities (Beauchemin, Hutchins, & Patterson, 2008; Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005). One study where teachers used mindful relaxation training was found to lower anxiety levels and improve the mood of junior high school students (Cheung, 1999). Another study used relaxation therapy and found it also reduced anxiety among students during tests (Dendato & Diener, 1986). A third study found that the students who participated in mindful training showed positive changes in their mood, self-esteem, and behaviour as a result of learning how to concentrate on their breathing (Napoli, 2002).

It becomes clear that mindful relaxation training has positive results and is a valuable tool for teachers to use in their classrooms. Looking at neurobiology, the neural structures and networks of an individual's brain, provides an explanation as to why mindful meditation is beneficial. Neurotransmitters play an important role in how the

brain interprets a threat, perceives stress, and reacts to a situation (Shatkin, 2015). Studies have found abnormalities in monoamine (dopamine, norepinephrine) and indoleamine (serotonin) neurotransmission in individuals who are diagnosed with an anxiety disorder compared to healthy control subjects (Stein et al., 2001). These neurotransmitters are important for regulating movement and emotions (Shatkin, 2015). When there are abnormalities with these neurotransmitters, the body becomes highly sensitive to stress and unable to properly regulate emotions leading to symptoms of anxiety (Shatkin, 2015). By incorporating mindful meditation and relaxation techniques, such as muscle relaxation, controlled breathing, and body movements or poses in the classroom, students with high anxiety or learning disabilities learn to be in the present moment (Beauchemin et al., 2008). They learn to refocus their thinking, which increases the level of monoamine and indoleamine in their brain, thus helping to regulate their emotions, and as a result their social and academic performance improves (Beauchemin et al., 2008; Shatkin 2015; Stein et al., 2001).

Mindful awareness, or mindfulness, is a catalyst for social and emotional learning and academic success in the classroom. It is typically defined as “a state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present” (Brown & Ryan, 2003, p. 822). It is the ability to reflect on what is happening and reflect on one’s emotions before reacting to a situation. Research suggests that children who are mindful (a) are less likely to experience psychological distress; (b) have greater awareness, understanding, and acceptance of their emotions; (c) less frequently have negative thoughts, and (d) are better able to deal and cope with them when they do arise (Brown, Ryan, & Cresswell, 2007).

Emotion regulation plays a large role in how students deal with problems and their behaviours in the classroom; mindfulness meditation helps one to develop effective emotion regulation and to better focus on cognitive tasks (Chambers, Lo, & Allen, 2008; Davis & Hayes, 2011; Ortner, Kilner, & Zelazo, 2007). Mindfulness meditation includes activities designed to gradually develop mindfulness such as focusing on breathing and paying attention to one's emotions, thoughts, and surrounding environment (Davis & Hayes, 2011). It has been shown to stimulate the middle prefrontal lobe of the brain, which is linked to self-observation and metacognition (Davis & Hayes, 2011). A study by Chambers et al. followed novice meditators who were participating in a mindfulness meditation retreat and compared them to a control group. Following the retreat, the meditation group had a significantly higher ability to identify their emotions, and felt lower levels of anxiety and physical illness symptoms compared to the control group. The meditation group also showed significantly better working memory capacity and greater ability to sustain attention during a performance task when compared to the control group. These findings suggest that mindfulness meditation practice may enhance working memory capacity, and in doing so promotes effective emotion regulation during stressful events, a period when working memory may otherwise fade. Another study suggests that through mindfulness meditation, individuals learn to disengage from emotionally upsetting stimuli, allowing them to change their focus to the impending cognitive task (Ortner et al., 2007). Davis and Hayes explain that this occurs because mindful meditation decreases the activity in the amygdala, the part of the brain that detects fear and other emotions, and increases the areas of the brain associated with attention and concentration. Therefore, one can conclude that incorporating mindfulness practices in

the classroom is beneficial for students as it reduces their stress levels, helps to regulate their emotions and, as a result, increases their working memory, which ultimately leads to higher academic performance.

Mindfulness practices in the classroom have also been found to have interpersonal benefits. Research indicates that mindfulness helps one to respond constructively to relationship stress (Barnes, Brown, Krusemark, Campbell, & Rogge, 2007; Davis & Hayes, 2011). One study found that people who regularly participate in mindfulness activities report less emotional stress when a relationship conflict occurs and feel less anger and anxiety during the conflict discussion (Barnes et al., 2007). Another study shows that mindfulness assists in identifying and communicating one's emotions to a partner (Dekeyser, Raes, Leijssen, Leyson, & Dewulf, 2008). Thus, mindfulness practices are beneficial to students socially as they allow students to express themselves in various social situations and establish positive relationships with peers and their teachers.

While there appears to be many benefits for students who practice mindfulness, there are also many benefits for teachers who use mindfulness practices in their classroom. Due to the main components of mindfulness, such as nonjudging, taking on other's perspectives, and thinking in the present moment before reacting to others, studies have found that teachers who use mindfulness practices are more empathic and show compassion for and provide good counselling to their students (Davis & Hayes, 2011; Flook, Goldberg, Pinger, Bonus, & Davidson, 2013). This boost in empathy and compassion is caused by an increase in brain activity in the relative brain regions due to mindfulness practices (Flook et al., 2013). In a study by Napoli (2004), teachers who incorporated mindfulness training found they were better able to manage conflict and

anxiety, thus, improving classroom productivity. Mindfulness has also been found to reduce teacher stress in the classroom and allows teachers to be more present to their students and attentive to their emotions (Flook et al., 2013). Research suggests that mindfulness training restricts the impact of stress on cortisol change that teachers develop during the school year, thus, lowering the amount of stress teachers experience (Flook et al., 2013). Since teachers are less stressed, they are able to place more attention on their students, address emotional and behavioural issues, and establish a positive learning environment (Napoli, 2004).

Mindful Programs

To help educators promote the positive social, emotional skills and the mental well-being for students, educators are being encouraged to use concepts from mindful programs in their classrooms. The MindUP Curriculum, Learning to BREATHE, Mindful Awareness Practices and The Mindful Education Program are four mindful training programs that have been found to improve social and emotional well-being and establish a positive learning environment for students. The first, The MindUP Curriculum, is designed for teachers who want to quickly incorporate mindfulness-based practices in their lessons, but do not have time to become trained in mindfulness practices (The Hawa Foundation, 2011). The second, Learning to BREATHE, is a program that demonstrates how schools can implement mindfulness practices into school successfully and recognized for its ability to help students regulate their emotions (Broderick & Metz, 2009). The third program is called Mindful Awareness Practices, which focuses on improving executive functioning in students to assist in behavioural and emotional regulation (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). The fourth program is the Mindful

Education Program, which was designed to promote positive emotion and self-regulation in the classroom (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). These are just a few of the many mindful awareness programs emerging to help teachers promote social and emotional learning, mental well-being, and academic success.

The MindUP Curriculum

The MindUP curriculum is a current program that utilizes evidenced-based social and emotional learning strategies, developmental neuroscience, and positive psychology to promote pro-social behaviour in schools (The Hawn Foundation, 2011). It combines brain research and mindfulness into classroom lessons that help teachers foster social and emotional skills. The curriculum is broken into three books divided by three age groups (Pre-k to Grade 2, Grades 3-5 and Grades 6-8) and includes 12-15 lessons for each age group. Each of the lessons are designed to provide teachers with lessons they can use to help students to “focus their attention, build resilience to stress, and develop a positive mind-set in both school and life” (The Hawn Foundation, 2011, p. back cover). The idea of these lessons is to make it simple for teachers to incorporate mindfulness into their lessons on a more regular basis. There are lessons that focus on mindful relaxing and mindful moving, mindful smelling, appreciating happy experiences, and more. Concepts, such as learning to get focused, sharpening senses (listening, seeing, tasting), attitude (perspective taking, optimism, happy experiences), and taking mindful actions (expressing gratitude, acts of kindness), are taught through these lessons. Many of the lessons are directly linked to brain-based research, are connected to the United States curriculum, and include worksheets for teachers to use in support of the lessons. These books are very useful for educators who may not have too much time for training

themselves in mindfulness-based practices. They can use these pre-made lessons to begin to incorporate mindfulness into their classroom.

One key aspect of these, the MindUP curriculum, is the mindful breathing that is encouraged to take place three times a day (The Hawn Foundation, 2011). This practice is encouraged as a brain break where children can quiet their minds in preparation for their brain to learn. Research has found that when the amygdala (a part of the brain that decodes emotions) is overexerted, the pre-frontal cortex (the part of the brain that is in charge of decision-making) has a difficult time doing its job and the hippocampus (the part of the brain that retains memories) has difficulty remembering what was learned (The Hawn Foundation, 2011). Therefore, these short 3-minute brain breaks allow students to relax their minds, refocus their concentration, and improve their ability to work and focus on their schoolwork.

Learning to BREATHE

More recently students have been noted as having difficulty focusing on their school work because of mental health problems related to stress, depression, and/or violence (Broderick & Metz, 2009; Canadian Mental Health Association, 2015; Schween & Roger, 2013), thus schools are trying to respond by integrating mindful curriculum into the classroom (Broderick & Metz, 2009). Learning to BREATHE is a mindfulness curriculum created by Broderick and Metz, specifically for classroom use, and is recognized for its ability to support the development of students regulating their emotional skills by practicing mindfulness. This program is not currently executed in schools, but was conducted to demonstrate how a mindful program would be possible to implement into a school successfully. In this trial program, the teachers were trained in

mindfulness-based stress reduction and familiarized with the theory and practice of mindfulness. Mindful sessions that connected to the curriculum standards in health were run during lunch and study periods as well as during classroom time. Each session was built around the BREATHE acronym and focused on a theme to cultivate emotional balance through the practices of mindfulness. Such themes included “body awareness, understanding and working with thoughts, understanding and working with feelings, integrating awareness of thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations, reducing harmful self-judgments, and integrating mindful awareness into daily life” (Broderick & Metz, 2009, p. 38). By the end of this study, students reported a reduction in negative emotions and increases in feelings of calmness, relaxation, and self-acceptance compared to a control group. Students suggested greater awareness of their feelings and an increase in emotion regulation after completing the program was also noted (Broderick & Metz, 2009).

These findings suggest that the Learning to BREATHE program is an effective way to teach students to use mindfulness to manage negative emotions and to learn how to understand their own thoughts and feelings that otherwise might provoke a response that could be harmful, such as rebelling through taking drugs, violent behaviour, or becoming more depressed (Broderick & Metz, 2009). Learning to view the present moment through the Learning to BREATHE program provides students with a tool to manage emotions and helps them prevent their emotions from taking control of their behaviours (Broderick & Metz, 2009; Davis & Hayes, 2011). Other benefits of these types of programs include reductions in tiredness and lower stress levels of the participants (Flook et al., 2013). Overall, the participants involved in the Learning to BREATHE program enjoyed the sessions due to its ability to help them learn to decrease

their worrying thoughts and feel more in control of their emotions, resulting in better academic performance in the classroom (Broderick & Metz, 2009).

Mindful Awareness Program (MAPs)

Strong executive functioning plays a crucial role in children's academic abilities, while poor executive functioning is associated with cognitive deficits, poor socioemotional adjustment, and poor academic functioning (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). This is due to a lack of concentration, inability to understand mental states, and lack of understanding for cause and effect (Flook et al., 2010). Mindful Awareness Practices (MAPs) is a school-based mindfulness program used to increase the state of awareness and improve features of executive functioning in relation to behavioural and emotional regulation in children and adolescents (Flook et al., 2010). Most exercises of the program involve interactions between students, and students and the teacher and promote different learning objectives for the week such as sensory awareness, attention regulation, awareness of other people, or awareness of the environment (Flook et al., 2010). Specific activities in the MAPs program by Flook et al., (2010) include kindness practices such as guided visualizations where the students "imagine themselves in a safe place feeling happy, healthy, strong and safe" (p. 85) or mimicking "other students' physical movements" (p. 86) to gain awareness of other people and the environment. Other activities focus on making eye contact, breath awareness, and walking meditation (Flook et al., 2010).

The results of schools that have used the MAPs program reveal that children with lower executive functioning show greater improvement after completing the program when compared to control groups. These students showed an improvement in behavioural

regulation, metacognition, and overall executive control after completing the MAPs program (Flook et al., 2010). These findings suggest that the MAPs program is not only good for the mental well-being of students, but also an effective way for improving the socioemotional skills and academic functioning in students.

The Mindful Education Program

Another program designed to foster positive emotion, self-regulation, and goal setting for personal and academic achievement is the Mindful Education Program (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). This program has been tested in schools across Western Canada and provides effective mindful awareness training. The Mindful Education Program uses mindful practices to enhance children's self-awareness, focussed attention, self-regulation, and stress reduction. Key mindful practices of the program consist of sitting in a comfortable position, attentive listening to a single sound, and then using breath as a focal point for being mindful and in the present moment (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). The teachers who use this program are encouraged to implement the mindful attention training exercises three times a day every day; however, most teachers who use the program often miss a few days of implementing the training (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). Although educators may not implement the program 100% of the time, positive results can still be obtained with as low as 60% implementation (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). Overall, studies reveal that children who participate in the Mindfulness Education Program had improved social behaviour and better self-control, were less aggressive and more attentive in class, and showed significant increases in optimism compared to children in control classrooms (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010).

The classroom is full of a diverse range of students with differing needs; thus, schools are now looking for ways to help their teachers meet more of the needs of their students. The MindUp curriculum, Learning to BREATHE, Mindful Awareness Practices, and the Mindful Education Program all demonstrate how mindfulness can be effectively used to help teachers promote social and emotional learning, mental well-being, and academic success for all students.

Social and Emotional Learning Programs

Expectations for educators are already high; along with meeting curriculum standards, they are also expected to support inclusive classrooms and teach students with a diverse range of needs (McClelland et al., 2000; Rosenthal & Gatt, 2010). It is unreasonable to expect them to act as mental health counsellors as well. However, educators can still help in producing mentally healthy young people. Schools have been integrating programs that promote social and emotional skills over the last 20 years in an attempt to prevent social and emotional behavioural, and mental health issues (Alexander, Entwisle & Dauber, 1993; Mullis & Jenkins, 1990; Rosenthal & Gatt, 2010). The focus of these programs is to create a school climate that promotes SEL skills through character development, violence prevention, and life skills lessons (Lendrum, Humphrey, Kalambouka, & Wigelsworth, 2009; Morningside Center, 2016). These lessons are designed to build communication skills and cooperation skills, and teach children how to resolve conflicts, reflect on personal experiences, and make thoughtful social decisions (Cohen, 1999; Lendrum et. al., 2009; Morningside Center, 2016). In addition to the four mindful programs mentioned above, SEAL, The 4Rs Program, and

PATHS are three SEL programs that educators can use to integrate SEL lessons into their daily routines.

SEAL

The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning program, also referred to as SEAL, is a whole-school approach for promoting the social and emotional skills that are necessary for learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, and emotional well-being (Wigelsworth, Humphrey, & Lendrum, 2012). First implemented in 2003 as part of the United Kingdom's Behaviour and Attendance Pilot project, SEAL is currently being used in over half of all primary schools across England (Wigelsworth et al., 2012). It is a curriculum that aims to promote positive behaviour and effective learning by focusing on five social and emotional aspects of learning: self-awareness, regulating feelings, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Lendrum et al., 2009).

SEAL is executed in three "waves of intervention" (Lendrum et al., 2009). The first wave of SEAL is designed to create a climate within the school that promotes social and emotional skills; it focuses on whole school development. The second wave of SEAL consists of small group interventions. It focuses on students who are considered in need of additional support in developing their social and emotional skills, such as students who may be new in the class and are struggling to make friends, or a child with behaviour issues (Lendrum et al., 2009). These groups also consist of students who are considered role models for their social and emotional skills (Lendrum et al., 2009). The third wave of the SEAL program involves one-to-one support for children who are at risk of or dealing with mental health issues and need more support than the small group intervention. With that said, SEAL is not intended as a program to be adopted when students are

experiencing mental health issues, rather, the SEAL program is intended as a preventive measure in reducing student behavioural issues, and as a method of increasing student well-being for all students (Britain, 2005). In addition, SEAL is designed as a supplement, not replacement, for what schools are already doing to promote social, emotional, and behavioural skills (Britain, 2005). The additional activities and resources are there to support the existing curriculum; however, it can also be incorporated as a separate framework and resource (Britain, 2005).

A curriculum resource has been created by the government of the United Kingdom by Britain (2005) titled *Excellence and Enjoyment: Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning*. This book acts as a resource for teachers in implementing SEAL. It is broken up into seven themes: New Beginnings, Getting on and falling out, Say no to bullying, and Going for goals! Good to be me, Relationships and Changes (Britain, 2005). These themes are designed for the whole-school to use and provide suggestions and activities for whole-school assemblies. The teachers are to use the follow-up activities in their classrooms, which are organized into four different levels: Foundation Stage, Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6. In addition, there are also booklets that provide ideas for learning opportunities as well as suggestions for small-group activities, staffroom activities, and family activities (Britain, 2005).

Teachers who have used SEAL at the primary level have reported improvements in student social and emotional skills (Downey & Williams, 2010; Hallam et al., 2006; Humphrey et al., 2008). These teachers were found to have higher confidence and skills for managing children's behaviour and claimed to understand their students better after using the SEAL program (Hallam et al., 2006). Parents also noted an improvement in

their children's "well-being, confidence, communication skills and attitudes towards school (Hallam et al., 2006, p. 143). Students also revealed that they felt more in control of their emotions, and enjoyed interacting with others at school more (Hallam et al., 2006).

Some factors that helped to ensure the SEAL program was successful included having a committed management team, providing staff time to understand the basis of the program and recognize its importance, establishing a plan for implementation of the program, and appointing a designated coordinator for the program in school (Hallam et al., 2006). Adopting a whole school approach also led to consistency in behaviour strategies across the school, allowing the classrooms to become a calmer space for students (Hallam et al., 2006).

Although the program has shown to be successful, there are still improvements that can be made to the program. Further improvements include visits to schools where the program is already in place, allowing teachers to network with other teachers periodically to share ideas and experiences (Hallam et al., 2006; Lendrum et al, 2009). Additional improvements would be to continually check on the progress of students throughout the program and involve parents more with the program (Hallam et al., 2006; Lendrum et al, 2009).

Overall, SEAL is considered a successful program for schools to adopt in order to promote social and emotional skills for all students. Whether run as a separate curriculum or absorbed into the existing curriculum, teachers can use SEAL to increase student learning, promote positive behaviour, regular attendance, and emotional well-being.

The 4Rs Program

The 4Rs Program (Reading, Writing, Respect, and Resolution) was created by Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility in 2005. It was first implemented in New York City public schools and is designed for students from pre-kindergarten to Grade 8 (Morningside Center, 2016). The 4Rs program uses an interactive literacy curriculum where students engage in reading, writing, discussion, and skills practice to foster caring, responsible behaviour (Morningside Center, 2016). Through the program, teachers are trained and provided with ongoing support (Brown, Jones, LaRusso, & Aber, 2010). Initial teacher training takes place over 5 days, prior to the beginning of the school year (Brown et al., 2010). Teacher training and ongoing support provided by program staff developers is key for the sustainability of the program within the entire school (CASEL, 2013). Teachers are provided with read-alouds, book talks, and interactive skills lessons that build upon one another to help develop social and emotional skills related to understanding and managing feelings, listening, developing empathy, solving conflicts non-violently, honouring diversity, and standing up to bullying (CASEL, 2013). Each grade has seven units, which consist of 21 to 35 lessons that are to be taught once a week throughout the entire school year. These lessons can be executed as explicit skills instruction or integrated into other academics (i.e., language arts). Extension activities and recommendations for other books, as well as a Family Connection activity for students to take home and complete with their parents, are also provided with each unit.

After just 1 year of the 4Rs Program, student academic performance improved, there was an increase in positive social behaviour, and conduct problems and emotional distress were reduced (Aber, Brown, Jones, Berg, & Torrente, 2011; Brown et al., 2010;

CASEL, 2013). Students with the most aggressive behaviours were found to have the most positive results for academics, specifically in math and reading (Aber et al., 2011). Research suggests the quantity and quality of program implementation and the effectiveness of the intervention may be influenced by teacher's beliefs (Brown et al., 2010). Therefore, the initial teacher training and ongoing support throughout the program appears to provide teachers with the resources and relationships necessary to stay engaged and run the 4Rs program both successfully. Although the cost to run the program is not publically stated by the 4Rs program, one study found there is \$11 of economic benefits gained for every \$1 invested, making the program extremely cost effective (Belfield et al., 2015).

Overall, the 4Rs program provides teachers with a method for integrating social and emotional learning into their classroom. However, since the program initially started and is based in New York City, it is unclear whether program training and resources are provided to an international community. Nonetheless, the 4Rs demonstrates how a successful SEL program can be conducted in schools to increase social, emotional, and academic skills.

PATHS and the SEAK Project

PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) is an evidenced-based elementary school curriculum that promotes peaceful conflict resolution, emotion regulation, empathy, and responsible decision-making (PATHS, 2016). It is designed to be used by educators and counsellors in a multiyear prevention program for children in preschool through Grade 6 (Socially and Emotionally Aware Kids, 2013). It is taught two to three times a week, a minimum of 20 to 30 minutes per day, and integrated with both

language arts and social studies (PATHS, 2016). Teacher training is approximately 2 days; however, PATHS' lessons are very detailed meaning training is not necessary for implementing the program (CASEL, 2013). In each lesson, there is a detailed script for teachers to follow, which also includes lesson goals, guidelines for implementing the lesson, suggestions for parental involvement, a list of common questions and answers, additional activities, and handouts for students to take home and complete with their families (CASEL, 2013). At the end of each lesson, teachers are given reminders and suggestions for taking these newly learned skills from the lesson and applying them to the classroom. Typical lesson activities consist of “writing, reading, telling stories, singing, drawing, science and math concepts” (PATHS, 2016, para. 5).

Teachers who have used the PATHS curriculum have reported decreases in student aggressive behaviour by 32%, lower rates of hyperactivity and inattention, increases on students' scores on cognitive skills tests by 20%, increases in students' vocabulary for emotions by 68%, and reduced depression and sadness among students at risk (PATHS, 2016). Research also reveals that by improving self-regulation through PATHS training, the risk of students bullying, dropping out, using drugs, and/or becoming involved in crimes is also reduced (SEAK Project, 2013).

Socially and Emotionally Aware Kids (SEAK) is a 3-year project run by the Canadian Mental Health Association NS Division (SEAK Project, 2013). This project is attempting to develop social and emotional learning in Atlantic Canada by implementing PATHS as their chosen social and emotional learning school curriculum. The goal is to bring social and emotional learning into Canadian schools with a proven curriculum, strengthening children's mental health throughout their lifetime (SEAK Project, 2013).

This project is one of the very few projects attempting to bring social and emotional learning into Canadian classrooms.

Barriers and Challenges with Social-Emotional Learning

Although the empirical data reveals SEL programs not only benefit children's social and emotional development, but also increases students' academic achievements (CASEL, 2008; Casella & Burstyn, 2002; Flair, 2013; Waajid et al., 2013), why might some school boards choose not to adopt SEL programs? Some school faculty may believe they are too busy trying to teach curriculum expectations in order to pass standardized tests (Cheng & Curtis, 2004), while others may be hesitant to adopt these programs for fear that the program, often run over multiple years, would not be implemented effectively (Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri, & Goel, 2011).

After a closer examination of the Ontario curriculum documents, it appears that social-emotional skills are directly integrated in the curriculum expectations. Thus, students must acquire social-emotional skills in order to meet the curriculum expectations (Zakrzewski, 2014). For example, looking at the Ontario Language Curriculum, under the Reading Strand, Specific Expectations 1.8 for Grade 1, 2, and 3, students are required to express their personal thoughts and feelings, identify traits they admire in characters, and demonstrate that the speaker has their own point of view (OME, 2006). These skills directly correspond to SEL skills such as "self-awareness," "social awareness," "relationship skills," and "responsible decision-making" (CASEL, 2016). In order to be able to identify other's thoughts and feelings as well as the traits and actions of others, whether fictional or not, students need to be able to recognize and label emotions when they occur within themselves. And, by examining the emotions of characters in stories,

students learn to recognize their own emotions in a nonthreatening way, as they get to experience a range of emotions from characters, without actually being put in those situations (Zakrzewski, 2014). Therefore, by integrating SEL into their lessons, teachers are not giving themselves additional work, but instead are more effectively meeting the curriculum standards.

Another barrier to adopting SEL programs is the cost and effectiveness of these programs. From the few studies conducted on cost effectiveness of SEL programs, it is suggested that SEL programs are an expensive investment for schools (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Hawkins, Smith, & Catalano, 2004); however, more research must be done to fully understand the effectiveness of these programs in relation to the cost (Durlak et al., 2011). If there are significant benefits of running SEL programs when compared to the operating cost, more schools may seek funding to run these programs to better support their students.

Summary

Social and emotional learning provides students with the skills they need to recognize their emotions, manage challenging situations, and establish positive relationships. By observing the behaviours of others and interacting with others, most students develop their social and emotional skills. These skills not only support students' mental well-being, but also promote student success both academically and socially inside and outside the classroom. However, some students may lack social and emotional skills and need extra support from their teachers.

Research has revealed that teachers who understand how the brain works and adapt their teaching methods to reflect student brain development are able to

accommodate their teaching to reflect the learning style of their students, which increases engagement, participation, SEL skills, and academic achievement for all students.

Research has also revealed that students who understand how their brain works are also found to enhance their classroom learning experience. By learning about the connection between what they are thinking and feeling, and their actions, students are able to make more mindful choices. Mindful awareness is closely connected to SEL as it also encourages students to learn to express themselves in social situations and build positive relationships with others.

The MindUP Curriculum, Learning to BREATHE, Mindful Awareness Practices, and The Mindful Education Program are four mindful training programs that have been found to improve social and emotional well-being and establish a positive learning environment for students. SEAL, The 4Rs Program, and PATHS are three SEL programs that educators can use to integrate SEL lessons into their daily routines. Each of these programs demonstrates how teachers can effectively promote social and emotional learning, mental well-being, and academic success for all students.

While the literature discusses the many benefits of integrating SEL into the classroom, it also presents a few barriers and challenges that must be considered. These include the hesitation of some school faculty to run SEL lessons due to their already limited time for teaching curriculum expectations, or the fear of not effectively implementing SEL over a period of years. However, research reveals that with proper training, resources, and support, SEL can be easily implemented into the existing curriculum and daily classroom activities. More research still needs to be done to fully understand the cost versus effectiveness of implementing SEL programs in schools. This

research study will continue to contribute to existing literature in its focus on the importance of integrating SEL into the school system.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter included the needs for and objectives of this handbook, *A Beginner's Guide to Teaching Social and Emotional Learning: A Handbook for Teachers, Administrators, and Parents*. It also presented the development process in the creation of the handbook and implementation for the handbook. It concluded with a summary of the chapter.

Needs for Handbook

In completing research towards social and emotional learning, it emerged from the literature that social-emotional learning (SEL) has a positive impact on student learning (Durlak et al., 2010; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Mindess et al., 2008). Teachers using brain-focused teaching strategies in their classrooms, including SEL, establish a more positive learning environment, where children succeed both socially and academically. With the recent increase of students with mental health issues, educators are encouraged to find teaching strategies to better support their students (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2015; Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2012; Schwean & Rodger, 2013). Since teacher training in Canada does not provide teachers with knowledge about social and emotional learning, teachers are left to learn about how to support the socioemotional development of students on their own (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2012). Many mindful and SEL programs exist and several were examined, all of which demonstrated success when integrated into schools. However, these are programs designed for the whole school to adapt; therefore, if an individual teacher is searching for resources on SEL, they are very limited in what they can find. Therefore, this handbook is a resource for individual educators seeking to understand SEL and ways

to implement it in their classroom. The methodology used in creating the handbook was a content analysis, which involved examining a variety of sources such as: journal articles, books, research studies, Ministry of Education documents, organizations, and programs.

Objectives of Handbook

This handbook was designed for Canadian educators and school personnel working with students in primary to intermediate levels. It can be used as a resource for teachers, administrators, early childhood educators, and parents who are pursuing knowledge on basic SEL concepts and how to apply SEL opportunities for students in the classroom.

The three main research objectives of the handbook are:

1. Increase the awareness about the brain-based learning and the importance of the development of social-emotional skills in students for their academic success and their overall well-being.
2. Provide teachers with information about the available SEL programs and their effectiveness in promoting self-regulation, and developing a positive school environment that benefits all students.
3. Provide educators with relevant classroom activities for developing social-emotional skills necessary for students' academic achievement and their overall well-being.

The handbook should be viewed as a resource to teachers who are new to SEL concepts and/or are unsure how to implement SEL activities for all students in their classroom.

The focus is on educating teachers on the need for social and emotional learning, and providing resources and strategies to begin implementing it in their daily lessons.

Therefore, this handbook is proposed to illustrate ways teachers can implement SEL activities and what it would look like in the classroom.

Process of Development

The development process for the handbook began with reviewing and analysing literature on SEL, including peer-reviewed scholarly articles. The literature consistently presented the need for and benefits of SEL in the classroom in preparing students with the social and emotional skills they need to succeed in school and after graduation (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2015; Canadian Teachers' Federation, 2012; Durlak et al., 2010; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Mindess et al., 2008; Schwean & Rodger, 2013).

The handbook is comprised of three sections. Section One, Introduction, provides a brief historical overview of SEL in the classroom, and presents the purpose of the handbook. It also describes SEL as a learning approach for establishing classroom climates that are responsive to children's social, emotional, physical, health, and intellectual needs. The relationship between brain-based learning and education is described as a way to accommodate for the emotional and social needs of students. Understanding how emotions impact different parts of the brain allows the reader to see why emotionally impacted students have difficulty learning. It suggests SEL as a method to help students learn to better manage their emotions, which will result in improved academic performance. This section ends by addressing how to introduce SEL into the school and the classroom. It provides a list of components that have been successful in past SEL programs and suggests strategies teacher can do to begin implementing SEL in their classroom.

Section Two, Teaching Social and Emotional Learning Activities, provides a variety of classroom activities that may be used to promote SEL in their classroom. The activities are organized by the five different aspects of SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. This is intended to help teachers to find activities quickly based on the needs of their students and incorporate them into their daily teaching, ensuring students are receiving ongoing social and emotional support. These activities are a combination of examples adapted from SEL program activities, textbooks for promoting student well-being, and the author's personal experiences.

Section Three, Additional Resources, offers teachers, administrators, and parents additional resources, such as books, websites, and organizations, to assist them in creating a SEL-based classroom. Teacher, administrators, and parents are encouraged to view each of these resources to expand their knowledge in social and emotional learning. They are also encouraged to record information in the Helpful Notes section on their new learning and the next steps they can take to continue to implement SEL strategies in their teaching practice.

Summary

The importance of supporting students in their social and emotional development, in addition to their academic development, has been gaining more and more attention in North America over the last 20 years, largely due to the increase in student mental health problems. There is growing evidence that children who have developed social and emotional skills adjust to school better and, thus, perform better academically. Therefore, research to create this document was done in order to increase the likeliness of results in

establishing positive classroom environments. This will contribute to existing literature that focuses on integrating SEL into the classroom to improve student social, emotional, and academic performance.

**CHAPTER FOUR: A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO TEACHING SOCIAL AND
EMOTIONAL LEARNING: A HANDBOOK FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS,
ADMINISTRATORS, AND PARENTS**

A Beginners Guide to Teaching Social and Emotional Learning

A Handbook for Elementary Teachers,
Administrators, and Parents

By Cherise Pantin Dear

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Section One

Introduction

With the proper knowledge, skills, and training, teachers can provide students with the foundational skills to self-reflect, manage self-behaviour, problem solve, and build relationships with others; skills students need to become successful citizens of society. Understanding how to provide students with these skills means less time spent on classroom management and more time on instructional activities and improved relationships between teachers and students. In other words, teachers who are aware of, understand, and promote regulation of emotions, establish classroom climates that promote active instructional engagement and positive relationships, leading to success both in and outside of the classroom (Waajid, Garner, & Owen, 2013).

Purpose of the Handbook

This handbook was created to inform and bring the awareness about the importance of SEL integration in the classroom. It is designed as a reference for teachers, administrators, early childhood educators, and parents new to SEL or seeking to learn more about SEL and its benefits. One of the main purposes of the handbook was to provide teachers with different classroom activities that promote social-emotional learning skills.



source: <http://wordcloud.booogle.net/>

Need for Social Emotional Learning

There is an increasing number of Canadian youth affected by a mental illness or experiencing social, emotional, and behavioural problems that impact their school success and interpersonal relationships (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2015; Schwean & Rodger, 2013). If these issues are not addressed effectively, they may lead to difficulties in adulthood such as job loss, family problems, suicide, and criminal activities (Schwean & Rodger, 2013). Since teachers spend the most time with children during their childhood, they play a huge role in facilitating the emotional well-being and social skills of children. Integrating SEL into the classroom not only helps students achieve higher grades, but also prepares them to be successful citizens in society.

History

Supporting students through social and emotional learning is influenced by three psychologists: Albert Bandura, Howard Gardner, and Daniel Goleman. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) describes learning as a cognitive process that takes place in social situations through observation, imitation, and modelling. Thus, to ensure students develop strong social skills, the social and emotional learning (SEL) approach has been developed as a way to provide students with opportunities to observe peers and/or teachers modelling positive social skills and motivate students to adopt these positive social skills for themselves (CASEL, 2016). Positive social skills include social awareness - taking the perspective of and empathizing with others, and relationship skills - establishing and maintaining healthy relationships, both of which are core components of SEL (CASEL, 2016).

Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983) states that individuals differ in the way they understand concepts, analyze, and solve problems. He refers to these differences as "Multiple Intelligences" (Gardner, 1983). There are currently nine recognized Multiple Intelligences; however, SEL focuses mainly on developing two of these intelligences: intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence (CASEL, 2016; Razmjo, 2008). Intrapersonal intelligence consists of one's self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making skills. Interpersonal intelligence consists of the ability to understand other people (CASEL, 2016; Razmjo, 2008). These skills are beneficial for developing socially and emotionally healthy children in schools (CASEL, 2016).

Goleman's Theory of Emotional Intelligence (1995) is the ability to understand and interpret one's own feelings and emotions, how they impact thinking and behaviour, as well as interpreting the feelings and emotions of others. Students often have difficulty expressing their feelings and/or interpreting the feelings of others, which results in negative behaviour and poor academic achievement (Lewkowicz, 2007). SEL is designed to help students develop emotional competence by teaching students to become self-aware of their feelings and to self-manage their behaviours (CASEL, 2016).

While aspects of the Social Learning Theory, the Theory of Multiple Intelligences, and the Theory of Emotional Intelligence have influenced the design of teaching social and emotional skills in schools, the term social and emotional learning is relatively new. SEL came about in 1994 when the Fetzer Institute hosted a conference with a team of educators and researchers to discuss preventing violence and drug use in schools and to promote healthy choices, school-community connections, and responsible behaviour. From this conference, the organization called The Collaborative Academic,

Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was established (Graczyk et al., 2000). CASEL is one of the top organizations that focus on developing academic, social, and emotional intelligence for all students (CASEL, 2016). Their mission is to take evidence-based SEL and make it a fundamental aspect of education from the primary to high school years (Graczyk et al., 2000).

What is Social and Emotional Learning?

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is about teaching children the skills they need to grow into independent and successful citizens in society. SEL is a learning approach which seeks to teach students (a) how to set positive goals, (b) how to behave in an ethical and responsible manner, (c) how to increase motivations, (d) how to reduce/prevent violent disruptions, (e) how to manage challenging situations in an effective and positive manner, and (f) how to establish positive relationships with peers and adults (Cohen, 1999; Desai, Karahalios, Periad, & Reker, 2014; Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (2016) has distinguished five core components schools must focus on when promoting SEL in schools:

- **Self-Awareness:** identifying and recognizing emotions, recognizing strengths, needs, values, understanding for one's behaviour
- **Self-Management:** regulating emotions, thoughts, behaviours, setting goals
- **Responsible Decision-Making:** problem identification and problem-solving, evaluating and reflecting, social and ethical consideration.

- **Relationship Skills:** communication, social engagement, working cooperatively, establishing and maintaining healthy relationships
- **Social Awareness:** perspective taking, difference recognition, empathy for others, respect for others

These five components allow students to achieve success in their academics, while also supporting and caring for their mental health and well-being, thus, creating students who are more socially and emotionally proficient (CASEL, 2016).

SEL has been found to be a positive support system for all students, increasing their happiness, behaviour, and academic skills. SEL also improves students' social behaviours towards others through kindness, sharing, and empathy, and it changes students' outlook on school; resulting in decreased student levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010).

The Relationship Between the Brain and Education

Understanding how the brain works allows teachers to recognize the importance of supporting students in developing their social and emotional skills. When students are feeling sad, angry, or stressed, their amygdala, the part of the brain that detects emotions, is unable to allow information to flow to other parts of their brains (Davis & Hayes, 2011). Students act on these negative emotions typically in the form of being physically aggressive or shutting down. Their attention and concentration is greatly affected and, therefore, learning becomes difficult. On the other hand, when students are feeling calm and peaceful, the amygdala is able to send information to other parts of the brain and has better cognitive control of their actions. They are able to disengage from any negative emotions and focus on the cognitive task at hand (Ortner, Kilner, & Zelazo, 2007). The

focus of SEL is to help students learn to manage their emotions so that when they do get upset or overwhelmed, they have strategies to bring their brain back to a calm and peaceful state. By creating a space that supports the emotional and social needs of students, teachers may improve the academic performance of their students while also providing them with the skills needed to be active citizens in their community.

Introducing Social and Emotional Learning in the Classroom

There are many different types of SEL programs and approaches that have been found effective, which include SEAL, The 4Rs Program, and PATHS. After an examination of these SEL programs, I have created a list of 10 components that these successful programs have incorporated:

1. **Have teachers attend SEL training workshops:** Teachers become familiar with SEL as an approach to education. They learn the skills and knowledge they need to provide students with the skills they will use to thrive in the classroom and outside world.
2. **Ensure a committed team of staff:** Teachers communicate with one another about their experiences with SEL and work together on promoting SEL; developing higher confidence and skills for managing children's behaviour.
3. **Get to know the students:** Learn about the needs and interests of students, as well as meeting their families; promoting a sense of community and gaining a sense of understanding for how the students learn.

4. **Establish a comfortable learning environment:** Teachers foster a sense of belonging, meaning, and emotional safety; ensuring students are comfortable working with others and taking risks in their learning.
5. **Adopt a whole school approach:** Whole school assemblies for SEL with follow-up activities in the classroom establishing a supportive learning environment for all students.
6. **Integrate SEL activities directly into the curriculum:** Teachers develop learning activities that are interactive, challenging, purposeful, catered to student interests, and promote positive learning.
7. **Incorporate a variety of activities:** A mixture of SEL activities for the whole school, for classroom lessons, and for working one-on-one, ensuring the differing needs of students are met in a fun, engaging, and supportive manner.
8. **Use SEL activities multiple times throughout the week:** Regular exposure to SEL allowing students to absorb, adapt, and apply newly learned skills as a part of their daily life.
9. **Share SEL goals with students:** Give students reminders about the SEL skills they are working on allowing them to monitor their progress throughout the year.
10. **Get parents involved:** Family friendly activities supporting SEL, sustaining the development of SEL skills outside the classroom.

Schools seeking to implement SEL should attempt to meet each of these components in order to promote a high quality education that will help students thrive as active citizens.

Although SEL is most effective as a whole school approach, teachers who do not have the support of the entire school can still use SEL as a successful learning approach in their individual classroom.

When first introducing SEL in the classroom, teachers should focus on making the classroom environment a safe, inviting, stimulating, and happy place to be when learning. Fostering a sense of community and belonging allows students to feel comfortable expressing themselves without judgement and they enjoy knowing that their thoughts and emotions are valued. Some ways teachers can do this is by encouraging students to become part of their own learning through the following activities:

- **Establishing Rules:** Teacher and students create a list of goals they aim to accomplish that year and rules to help them to accomplish them.
- **Interactive Modelling:** Teachers model the behaviours, establish signals for quiet, set guidelines for classroom discussions, practice modelling behaviours with students.
- **Classroom Organization:** Encourage student cooperation and collaboration with the setup of the classroom.
- **Morning Meetings:** Gathering briefly as a group at the beginning of each school day to greet, share, and establish the daily goals as a whole group.
- **Brain Breaks:** Brief breaks during lessons to help students refocus their learning, memory, and motivation.
- **Energizers:** Brief but playful activities for the whole class to use as a break between lessons.

- **Circle Time:** Gathering briefly as a group at the end of the day to reflect and celebrate the activities of the day.

Source: responsiveclassroom.org

Once a positive and supportive classroom environment has been established, teachers can begin to integrate SEL activities as part of their daily lessons. The following chapter describes a list of activities that support social and emotional skills and can be adapted for students at any age level. Some of the activities provide connections to the curriculum for teachers who want to integrate SEL while meeting curriculum expectations.

Section Two

Teaching SEL - Activities

The following activities are divided by the different components of social and emotional learning, thus, allowing teachers to quickly find the type of activity suitable to the learning needs of their students. These activities should be considered guidelines for integrating SEL into the classroom and can be easily adapted to better suit students' grade level. They are categorized by the core components of SEL: (1) Self-Awareness and Self-Management, (2) Social and Emotional Awareness, (3) Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision-Making.

(1) Self-Awareness and Self-Management

Teaching students to identify, recognize, and regulate emotions helps to refocus thinking and results in productive social and academic experiences. There are several approaches to teaching students to become aware of their emotions and be mindful of how they act on their emotions such as: Calming and Visualization Activities, Sensory Activities, Impulse Control, Emotion Regulation.

Calming and Visualization Activities

1.1 ACTIVITY: Water Ripples

OBJECTIVE:

This relaxation activity is a great way to introduce children to the physical sensations that come along with breathing. It should have a calming effect on the mind and body.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Beanie bag
- Mats or towels

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Begin this activity by having the students lie down on a mat/towel and place a beanie bag on their stomach. Students may place their hands on their stomach as an alternative. Encourage students to close their eyes.

Say:

Take a really deep breath in and then let it out. Let's do that again. Take a really deep breath in and then let it out. Did you notice your beanie bag moving up and down on your tummy as you were taking these deep breaths? Now I want you to breath like you normally do. Is your beanie bag still moving up and down? Keep breathing, relax your head, your chin, relax your whole face and only pay attention to your breathing, nothing else. If you start to get distracted by your thoughts, go back to paying attention to your breathing and your beanie bag moving up and down each time you take a breath.

- Pause and allow students to practice focusing on their breathing.

Now I want you to start imagining your breath is a water ripple moving up and down your body. Just like the water ripples can be big and other times they can be small, your breath can be big and other times it may be small. When you breath in picture the water ripples moving along your body starting at the tip of your head and when you breath out picture the water ripples moving all the way down to the bottom of your feet. (Pause for a few minutes for students to continue to picture the water ripples moving up and down their body). When you are ready, begin to feel your back touching the floor, then your feet touching the floor. Slowly open your eyes and bring yourself back into the classroom.

How did you like that exercise? How do you feel now that the exercise is over?

(Adapted from Bossi & Porter, 2011)

1.2 ACTIVITY: My Kite Reel

OBJECTIVE:

Sometimes our thoughts begin to drift and we begin worrying about our problems instead of the present moment. This activity helps students to understand that when this happens, they should turn to focusing on their breathing.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Sheets of blank paper
- Garbage bags
- Blue, red, green, yellow, white tissue paper cut into strips
- A piece of string for each student
- Small, twigs (six per student)
- White liquid glue
- Pencil crayons (optional)

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Ask students if they have ever seen a kite or flown one themselves. Ask them how we control the kite from drifting away in the wind. Students should describe how the kite reel helps to bring the kite back to us and stops the kite from floating away. Then explain that sometimes our thoughts can float away from us just like a kite can float away. But, just like a kite reel helps to bring the kite back to us, focusing on our breathing can help bring us back to what we are seeing in front of us at the present moment.

Say:

Our activity today is going to be creating a picture of a kite floating in the sky attached to its reel, reminding us that just like a kite always has a reel to keep it from drifting away, we always have our breathing to keep our thoughts from drifting and to help us refocus on the present.

Each of you are going to make a picture of your own kite flying in the sky attached to a kite reel. You can choose to draw yourself holding the kite if you like.

Hand out materials to students. Cover the desks with garbage bags to keep them from getting messy.

Allow students to use their creativity in this project. Encourage students to be creative.

- The idea is to have students use the sticks to make a diamond shape outline on the white paper.

- Students then glue the tissue paper in the diamond to make the kite and the blue tissue paper to cover the sky.
- To make the reel, students glue two sticks in a cross shape and glue a string between the kite and the reel.
- They can choose to draw a person or themselves holding the kite and use their creativity to draw a scene where the kite is flying (ex. in a park, on a hill etc.).

Once students have finished their image, hang them on the wall so that students can continually be reminded about refocusing on their breathing when their thoughts begin to drift.

(Adapted from Miller, 2010)

1.3 ACTIVITY: Guided Breathing: Filling a Tire With Air

OBJECTIVE:

The focus on breathing helps students connect to the present moment by slowing down their breath and allowing them to relax their body and mind. It is a great way to calm down the class after an exciting gym period or school assembly and refocus back into the classroom.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- None required

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Begin this activity by having students sit on the floor with their legs crossed. Have students place their hands on their knees and close their eyes.

Say:

Close your eyes, let's take a deep breath in through your nose and out through our mouth. Breathe in through your nose and breathe out through your mouth.

- Model this for the students.

When you take a deep breath feel your whole body relax. Pretend to squeeze a ball in your hands, squeeze your hands as tight as you can. This is how it feels when you tense your muscles. Now pretend to let go of the balls in your hands; this is how it feels when your muscles are relaxed. See the difference between your hands feeling tense and relaxed. It is nice when we make our whole body feel relaxed. We can help our whole body to relax by taking deep breaths. Let's practice doing this.

Imagine that your body is like a car tire. When you breathe in, feel your chest and sides expanding, like a tire filling with air. When you breathe out, imagine your body is like a tire shrinking with the air being let out. Breathe in like a tire being blown up. Now breathe out, like the air is being let out of a tire. Remember the difference between tense and relaxed. Tighten your leg muscles to make both of your legs tense. Squeeze tighter... tighter... and now relax. Let your legs become very relaxed. Each leg is as floppy as a piece of string.

Now tense your arms. Make the muscles very tight and tense. Tighter.... and now relax. Your arms are relaxed, limp and loose as pieces of string. See how it feels to be relaxed.

Your legs and arms are relaxed. Now let your whole body become relaxed. See how relaxed you can make your body, making every muscle feel like a piece of string.

Relax even more by focusing on your breathing again. See how calm your breathing is. Take a breath in.... and out.... in.... and out.

- Pause here to allow students to really focus on their breathing and relax.

Keep your eyes closed for a little longer while you wake up your body and your mind by wiggling your fingers and toes.... moving your arms and legs... Feel your hands resting on your knees. Feel your legs touching the floor. Sit still now for a moment, and open your eyes to look around the room.

Ask the students if they would like to share how they felt during the exercise.

(Adapted from Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005; Collard & Walsh, 2008)

1.4 ACTIVITY: Words That Sooth

OBJECTIVE:

This activity encourages students to practice self-soothing. Having students repeat a special word or sequence of words such as “take a breath”, “relax”, “warm milk”, helps students to practice self-relaxation techniques when they feel stressed or anxious.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Chart paper
- Marker

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Begin this activity by having students sit on the floor with their legs crossed. Have students place their hands on their knees and close their eyes.

Say:

We have already learned about how focusing on our breath can help us feel calm and focussed inside. There are other ways we can help to calm and sooth ourselves. Learning to say positive words as we breath out is helpful too. Let's brainstorm different words or short sentences that you may consider soothing.

- After brainstorming, have students pick their own soothing word. Explain that some students may choose the same word, while others may have their own word. This list can be displayed on the classroom wall as a reference for students throughout the year.

Now I want you to repeat your word or phrase inside your head. (Pause) Now say it out loud a few times. (Pause) Try out different words or phrases and see which ones you like best. Once you decide on your soothing words and phrases, I want you to share it with the person beside you.

- Remind students that they should try saying these words or phrases next time they are angry or upset.

(Adapted from Bossi & Porter, 2011)

Sensory Activities

1.5 ACTIVITY: What Do You Hear?

OBJECTIVE:

Students draw their attention to the sounds around them, bringing them to the present moment. This activity encourages students to become aware and promotes curiosity.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Paper and pencil/pencil crayons

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Being this activity by bringing students outside and have them sit on the grass.

Say:

I want you to close your eyes for 1 minute. As you do this, listen to the sounds you hear outside in the schoolyard (Pause for a minute). Now I want you to listen for all the sounds you hear across from the schoolyard (Pause for a minute). Were these sounds loud? Were these sounds quiet? Were these sounds repetitive?

- Encourage students to share the sounds they heard and write them on chart paper. You may get answers such as hearing sneezing, sniffing, grumbly stomachs, birds, passing cars, dogs walking by the schoolyard.

Did you notice these sounds before we did this activity?

- Explain the importance of stopping every so often to listen and appreciate the sounds around us. Have students draw what they heard on a piece of paper as an art project, you may encourage them to use dark colours to represent the loud sounds and light colours to represent the quieter sounds, or allow them to be creative in how they represent the different sounds. Another option is to turn this into a language activity where students describe the sounds they heard.

Ask if any students would like to share how they felt during this activity.

(Adapted from Collard & Walsh, 2008)

1.6 ACTIVITY: What Do You Smell?

OBJECTIVE:

This activity encourages students to explore their sense of smell. Through this activity students learn to become present in the moment and it promotes curiosity.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Various household spices that smell (cinnamon, vanilla essence, garlic powder, curry powder, coffee beans, vinegar, lemon juice, etc.)
- Small bowls for the spices
- Cotton balls for the liquids

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Have students gather in a group on the carpet. Encourage students to take a few deep breaths in and out. Pass the scents to a group of students and ask them to waft their hand over the container to smell what is in the bowl. Allow each member at least 10 seconds to smell. Remind students this is a silent activity. Give signal when it is time to pass the container. When everyone has had a chance to smell the first scent, have students record thoughts about the following questions on paper.

Say:

Smell what is inside your bowl. What does it smell like? Is the smell a good smell? Is it a bad smell? Does the smell remind you of anything? Does it remind you of more than one thing? What does the smell make your body feel like? Where do you feel this? Do you feel the smell in your chest? Do you feel it in your head? Do you feel it in your hands? Does it make your mouth water?

After students have recorded their thoughts, have students switch scents with another group and repeat the process. Ask if anyone would like to share what they noticed during this activity.

Curriculum Connection: This activity can be further extended to social studies. Ask students to collect sensory samples to represent foods or customs of a group. For example, collecting samples of herbs grown in a family garden during early civilization in Canada. Providing sensory details such as the smell of herbs can enhance students' sense of history. It gives a concrete framework for students to attach their new learning.

(Adapted from Carmody & Baer, 2008; Hawn Foundation, 2011b; Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005)

1.7 ACTIVITY: Releasing Stress

OBJECTIVE:

This activity encourages students to release their stresses. This activity promotes body awareness and relaxation.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Balloons (one for each student)
- Rice
- Funnel
- Elastic bands

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Begin the activity by having students clear off their desks. Hand out a balloon to each student and have them stretch them as you come around to pour rice into their balloon. Have students tie their balloon with an elastic band once they are filled with rice.

Say:

We have just created our own textured stress ball. I want you to close your eyes and squeeze the rice ball. How does it feel between your fingers? Is it soft? Is it hard? Squeeze as hard as you can. Release all the tension in your body into the rice ball. Now relax your hands.

Have students place their rice ball in a shared box. Remind students that they can get their stress ball from the box and do this exercise on their own when they feel stressed or angry.

Ask if anyone would like to share how they felt during the activity and after the activity.

1.8 ACTIVITY: My Calming Bottle

OBJECTIVE:

This activity encourages students to refocus their energy. This activity promotes relaxation and becoming aware of the present moment.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Clear plastic water bottle (one for each student)
- Glitter
- Sequins
- Elmer's clear liquid glue
- Water
- Tape
- Food colouring (optional)

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Begin by organizing the desks into stations. Have a glitter station, a sequin station, and a water station. Hand out clear plastic water bottles to each student. Have students start at one of the stations. Ask them to fill their water bottle with the supplies at each station and once they have visited all stations to come to you for the glue and tape. (It is best for the teacher to put the glue & food colouring into the bottles as too much glue & colour may ruin the effectiveness of the bottle).

Say:

Now that we have created our own calming bottle, I want you to think of something that upset you or made you mad this week. Now pick up your bottle and shake all your anger into it. Once you have finished putting all your anger into the bottle, put the bottle down and watch the glitter and sequins sink to the bottom. As you are doing this I want you to notice your breathing, take long breaths in and out. Keep your eyes on the glitter and sequins in your bottle. Do not move until all the glitter and sequins have sunk to the bottom of your bottle.

Ask if any student would like to share what they noticed about this activity.

(Adapted from Smalley & Winston, 2010)

Impulse Control Activities

1.9 ACTIVITY: Freeze And Control Your Temptations

OBJECTIVE:

This activity encourages students to practice controlling behaviours and resisting distractions. The activity extension helps students develop body awareness.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Piano/keyboard

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Begin activity by explaining that the ability to control your behaviours and feelings is called impulse control. An impulse is a strong desire to do something, and to control our impulses we need to apply our thinking skills. Have short discussion about times students may have been tempted to do something they knew they should not be doing.

Say:

I want you to think about a time you were tempted to do something you knew you shouldn't do. Maybe your birthday is coming up and you found out where your parents hid your birthday present and you really want to see what you will be getting. What would you do? Would you wait until your birthday to find out or would you look when no one was around? What if you knew you would not get caught? Would you take a peek?

- Allow students time to think about these questions.

Resisting the urge to look requires a skill called self-control and we all go through moments when it is difficult to resist a tempting situation.

- Explain that they are going to play a game where they must move and dance around the room while I play the piano. When I stop playing the piano they must freeze and cannot move until I start playing again. If they don't freeze or they start moving before the piano plays again, they will have to sit out for the rest of the game.
- Add a challenge after a few rounds to tempt students to move, such as offering chocolate or candy to students while they are frozen. You want to help children remember that while they may want to move, focusing on their actions will help them remember what they should be doing.

Sample discussion questions after the activity:

How did it feel to stop and freeze when I stopped playing?

What did you do to help you stay frozen? Did anything make it hard for you to freeze?

What about when I offered you chocolate and candy?

Can you think of any experiences you may have at home or in school that you need to practice self-control?

Curriculum Connection: This activity can be turned into a physical education lesson where students freeze and tense every muscle in their bodies when the music stops, and when the music begins again they thaw (relax) and slowly melt to the ground, paying attention to how their different movements make their bodies feel. Recognizing the feelings of tension and relaxation can help students identify when tension is building in their bodies and how relaxation feels.

(Adapted from centervention.com; The Hawn Foundation, 2011b).

1.10 ACTIVITY: Get Ready To Move!

OBJECTIVE:

This activity promotes careful listening, focus, and patience to wait for others to finish speaking. Students learn to be self-aware and self-manage their actions towards others.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Small objects (cone, ruler, etc....)

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Choose a starting line and place the small object about 5 meters ahead, and another about 5 meters beyond that, continue doing this until you feel you have enough. Line up students next to each other at the starting line.

Say:

When you hear the word “Move” you have to run to the first object. You cannot run until you hear the word “Move” so listen carefully. If you start running before I say “Move” you will not get to move to the next object and must go back to the very beginning object.

- During the activity tempt students’ impulses by substituting the word “Move” with other words that begin with the letter M, such as “make”, “match”, “middle”, etc. Say the phrase “Get ready to M...” before saying your chosen M-word.

Did you have a difficult time waiting for me to say the word “Move”? If so why was it difficult?

Did you find any helpful strategies to help you wait until I said the word “Move”? Did you accidentally move before I said the word ‘Move’? Did you enjoy having to start from the very beginning when you did that?

- Try to get the students to understand that having to start over in this game is just like interrupting others in conversation. If you are always interrupting, the conversation starts over, and you lose the momentum you’ve built with the other person. Sometimes interrupting means that you have stopped listening intently and you will end up missing important information.

Curriculum Connection: This activity can be conducted as a physical education lesson. Students must complete an exercise every time they reach an object. For example, the first object can be jumping jacks, the second can be push-ups, etc....

(Adapted from centervention.com)

1.11 ACTIVITY: My Behaviour My Choice!

OBJECTIVE:

This activity examines the choice to behave. Students learn to recognize there are many ways of behaving and they can choose their own behaviour.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- None

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Begin with an activity asking for four volunteers to do the following activities:

1. *Dance*
2. *Show appreciation to someone.*
3. *Show what it looks like to be rude to someone.*
4. *Show what it looks like to get angry.*

- Have volunteers sit back down.

Discuss with students whether they think the volunteers did the exactly same thing for each activity. See if they noticed that not all the volunteers acted the same way when asked to do something. Make the connection to how we as humans have a choice in how we behave; we do not have to act the way someone tells us to.

Say:

Was there ever a time you did not behave the way you were told to behave? Can you give me an example?

Since we all have a choice in our behaviour, what are some types of behaviours that we should avoid? What are some behaviours we should be encouraged to do?

Curriculum Connection: Through a social studies lesson, allow students to research people in history who used their actions to lead to good throughout history. Students may research people such as Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, etc....

(Adapted by Vernon, 1989)

Emotion Regulation Activities

1.12 ACTIVITY: Witnessing Emotions

OBJECTIVE:

Students learn to recognize different emotions and the different feelings they experience throughout their daily activities.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Paper
- Pencil crayons

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Describe various situations for students to experience a range of emotions.

Say:

Use your imagination to play out this situation as a movie happening in your mind. Imagine you are standing up, walking to the door, and going out to play your favourite game or do your favourite activity. What are you feeling in your body as you picture this scene?

- Students should express feelings of happiness and joy.

Now I want you to imagine that someone walks up to you as you are playing your game or doing your favourite activity and very angrily tells you to stop what you are doing.

- Have students picture this scene and notice how it affects their bodies. Ask them to describe how they are feeling now. They should describe feelings of frustration and anger.

Now imagine you are coming back to school and you were just told there is a pop quiz. You haven't studied. Picture yourself sitting down to take the quiz, how does your body feel?

- Students describe feelings of worry, anxiety and stress.

You have just been given the quiz back and have received a perfect score! How are you feeling right now? Your friend got a perfect score as well.

- Students should begin to feel what it feels like in their bodies to feel good about someone else's success.
- Hand out pieces of paper and ask students to imagine being given a pop quiz or some stressful situation. Then have them draw an outline of their

body, and fill it with shapes and colours to show the emotions they feel inside their body.

Curriculum Connection: This activity can be linked to Language Arts. Have students write out adjectives that describe what their body feels like when they are stressed. For each one, they must describe something specific that can help them relax or release that stress.

(Adapted from Rechtschaffen, 2016)

1.13 ACTIVITY: Sharing Emotions

OBJECTIVE:

Students will identify emotion words and recognize the importance of expressing emotions.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Chart paper
- Marker
- Box
- Cue cards (5 per student)

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Brainstorm with students as many feeling/emotion words they can think of and list them on chart paper. Choose a few of the emotion words (happy, frustrated, worried, etc.) and ask a few students to describe situations that might make them feel these emotions. Use some of these situations to discuss whether they would cause a smaller emotion like being slightly annoyed, or a strong emotion, like being furious.

Say:

Sometimes we have feelings that may be big or small that we keep to ourselves. This is called hiding our feelings, which is just like hiding something in box so that no one is able to see what is inside the box. I want you to think about a time when you might have kept your feelings to yourself and write that feeling on a cue card and put it in the box. (Students may refer to emotions listed on the chart paper). There are probably some feelings that you don't hide, but enjoy sharing with others. (These are usually happy feelings). Write down some of these feelings on the outside of the box.

- Allow students to share the feelings they tend to keep hidden inside, away from others. Then encourage students to share examples of feelings they enjoy sharing with others.

If you always hid your feelings from others and kept them inside, what do you think would happen? (Discuss negative effects of keeping feelings inside). Do you usually feel better or worse when you share your feelings with others?

Emphasize during this activity that expressing feelings is important, and it is okay to do so.

(Adapted from Vernon, 1989)

1.14 ACTIVITY: Relaxation Zone

OBJECTIVE:

Students will learn emotion regulation strategies to help manage their emotions.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Chart paper/Marker
- Bean bag chair and stress ball
- Reflection paper (see below for description)

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Emphasize the negative effects that occur when keeping feelings inside and stress the importance of expressing feelings, and that it is okay to do so. Explain to students that when they are feeling a strong emotion they can choose to excuse themselves and go to the Relaxation Zone (a place you have set up in the room with a bean bag chair).

Say:

Sometimes something happens that makes us feel angry or sad or upset. These are called emotions or feelings. Let's create a list of emotions that we may experience. (Create a list of emotions with students).

When you go to this zone, the first thing to identify what emotion you are feeling and then try to think of a strategy to help you manage this feeling. Can you think of any strategies we have already learned to help us to calm down and relax?

- Brainstorm a list of strategies and write them out on chart paper. Pass out reflection sheets with the questions. Have students fill out their sample reflection worksheet during this lesson.

Steps for the Relaxation Zone:

1. Pick an emotion strategy from the chart.
2. After trying out the strategy and once you feel like you have relaxed, complete the worksheet by answering the following questions:
 - **What situation caused you to feel this emotion?** (For this sample lesson, have students write about a time they felt very angry).
 - **What were you feeling when this happened?** (Students choose the emotion word from the list you created as a class that explains how that situation made them feel and write that word on their worksheet).
 - **What will you do next time?** (Students describe what they can do differently next time to avoid feeling this way again).

Note: The Relaxation Zone is typically a spot you have set up with a bean bag chair, list of emotions, list of emotion regulation strategies, a stress ball, and reflection worksheets.

(Adapted from centervention.com)

1.15 ACTIVITY: Making Mistakes Is Okay

OBJECTIVE:

Students will discuss emotions related to making mistakes and learn that mistakes do not make people bad or mean you are not smart; they are often a starting point for even better things.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Karma Completions worksheet (see below)

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Say:

How does it feel when you make a mistake on something you have put a lot of work into?

- Have students give an example of when they made a mistake, or provide them with a time when you made a mistake

How do you usually feel when you make a mistake?

What can you do when you make a mistake and it makes you upset?

Do you think making mistakes can ever be a good thing?

- Explain that sometimes making a mistake teaches us a lesson; other times it helps us come up with ideas that are even better than we originally planned. Hand out the Karma Completions worksheet.

On this worksheet I am handing out, Karma was drawing a picture but gave up when she thought she made a mistake, so she started in a new square and made a mistake there too. She kept doing this and never actually finished a picture. I want you to complete each drawing using the line or shape that Karma has already drawn.

- When students are finished, have them compare their drawings. Discuss how they all started with the same “mistakes”, but came up with very different ways of changing them into looking like something great!

(Adapted from centervention.com)



KARMA'S COMPLETIONS

Name: _____

Directions: Karma the chameleon started a bunch of different drawings, but she gave up when she thought she made mistakes. Use your imagination to complete the drawing in each of the squares using the line or shape that is already there. Help show Karma how she could have turned her mistakes into cool drawings!

(2) Social and Emotional Awareness

Teaching students to recognize that how they react to a situation may be different to how others react and learning to respect others and their differing opinions/emotions is key to social awareness. There are several approaches to teaching students to develop social awareness such as focusing on: Empathy, Practicing Kindness, and Compassion.

Empathy Activities

2.1 ACTIVITY: Interpreting Others Emotions

OBJECTIVE:

This activity introduces students to identifying different emotions in others. Children learn to recognize that others may have different reactions and perspectives to a situation.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- None

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Write out the following sentence on the board. “I am happy”.

Say:

This is my happy face (make a happy face).

- Expand the sentence to “I am happy when I teach you”. As you read the sentence, show your happy face again.

What makes you happy? (Invite some students to share). Can you show me your happy face?

What makes you sad? (Invite some students to share). Can you show me your sad face?

- Continue this activity for other emotion words such as upset, fearful, excited.
- Have students find a partner and take turns identifying the emotion on their partner’s face.
- After the activity, lead a discussion on how people feel different emotions in similar situations.

What are some of the things that make us happy? It is important to understand that we are all different and have different memories and experiences. This means that some people may experience a different emotion when put in the same situation. For example, holding a snake might scare me, but it might not scare you because your cousin has a pet snake. This is why looking at someone’s face can help us to identify how that person is feeling.

- Remind students that understanding how someone is feeling allows us to view the situation from a different perspective and consider their needs.

Curriculum Connection: This activity can be linked to Dramatic Arts. Similar to charades, have students take turns acting out different situations that cause different

emotions. The rest of the students must try to guess how the person is feeling in that situation. (For example, act out how a person is feeling on their birthday as they blow out the candles on their cake.)

(Adapted from The Hawn Foundation, 2011a)

2.2 ACTIVITY: Character Perspectives

OBJECTIVE:

In this activity, students identify different perspectives of a character in a story. They learn to apply open-minded perspective taking to social situations in their own lives.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka (or any other picture book/short story featuring characters with different perspectives on the same event)
- Character Perspective Activity Sheet (see end of lesson)

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Have students retell the original version of The Three Little Pigs (Read a version of the story if they are unfamiliar with it). Explain that you will read another version of the story that is told by the wolf instead of by the pigs. As you read the story, have students listen closely for actions and words that describe the perspectives of the main characters.

Say:

What did the wolf's do and say to let you know how he was feeling? What type of experiences does the author suggest the wolf usually has?

Author's usually give us clues to past experiences, feelings, or beliefs of a character to help us to understand how that character is feeling and why they are choosing to behave the way they do in the story.

- Have the class choose one character to study and lead students through a character-perspective analysis by filling in the Character Perspective activity sheet (see end of this lesson for activity sheet).
- Place students in groups of three and have them explore the same events from the perspective of a different character.

Were there any other characters in this story that experienced the same events as the wolf? (Have students answer the same questions as they did for the wolf for these new characters who went through the same events).

Who do you think was telling the truth about the events?

Do you think there may be another character's perspective we could look at to find out what really happened?

The wolf and the three pigs did not seem to feel the same way about the events, how might the characters talk together to understand one another?

- Have students create a dialogue and perform how the characters might talk to one another to learn about each other's perspective.

We are trying to understand things from someone else's experiences, this means we are looking at things from someone else's perspective.

What do you think might happen if we make a judgment before trying to see things from another person's perspective? Sometimes we punish people without letting them share their story from their own perspective.

- Remind students that different people may have different reactions to and different view or opinions about the same event. Taking the time to consider others' perspectives makes us less likely to make quick judgments and decisions, which can often be unfair to others.

Curriculum Connection: This activity is closely linked to Language Arts. Identifying character traits, motives, and perspectives is essential to narrative texts. Using perspective taking to better understand the needs, concerns, and values of characters helps students apply the skill to relating to others too.

(Adapted from The Hawn Foundation, 2011b)

Date _____

Character Perspectives

Title of Story: _____

Name of Character: _____

Choose an important event in the story. Use what you know about this character's feelings and actions to show his or her perspective.

Event: _____

What do you think your character was thinking and feeling when this event happened?

Why do you think your character acted the way he or she did?

Do you think your character's actions were easy to understand, or could they have been misunderstood?

source: The Hawn Foundation (2011b). The MindUp Curriculum (Grades 3-5)

2.3 ACTIVITY: Put Yourself In Their Shoes

OBJECTIVE:

In this activity, students learn to identify how others may be feeling and are encouraged to be sensitive to others' feelings.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Pencil and paper for each student
- Computers

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Discuss the importance of considering another's perspective and taking into account their feelings.

Have students search for online newspapers. Have them find articles that focus on recent events such as robberies, earthquakes, concerts, sports events, births, wedding announcements, etc.

Once each student has found at least three different articles each explain the following:

Say:

*Why is it important to think of how others might be feeling in a certain situation?
How do you know how they are feeling?*

- Have students join with a partner and share the articles they found. Have them write down words to describe how the people involved may be feeling. (For instance, one article may be about a young student who is going to be presenting a speech to her school next week. Students may describe that this girl may be feeling nervous, but her parents may be feeling proud.)
- Invite students to share their articles with the rest of the class and explain what they think the people involved in the article might be feeling.

*Did you find it hard to figure out how the people in the article might be feeling?
Were some situations easier than others to identify how the people were feeling?
Why were some situations more difficult?
Are you certain you know how those people feel? Why or why not?*

- Continue discussing examples of when students were in a situation and thought they knew how someone was feeling but they were wrong. Invite students to share things they can do or look for in order to be sensitive to how someone else might feel.

- Discuss how it is not always possible to know exactly how someone else is feeling, but we can interpret a person's body language, ask the person directly, or try to imagine ourselves in the other person's situation.

Curriculum Connection: This activity can be linked to Social Studies. Choose pictures of a place that looks different from where you live. Have the children imagine living there and answer questions such as; "What would you eat?" "What would you wear?" "What would be different and what would be the same about living there?" Explain that as humans we all share the same basic needs. Students should begin to empathize with others who have different lives or values by recognizing similarities and appreciating differences.

(Adapted from Vernon, 1989)

2.4 ACTIVITY: An Optimistic Perspective

OBJECTIVE:

In this activity, students will learn about different ways to think about, react to, and approach a problem. They will identify what optimism looks like and practice strategies to help them maintain optimism in their own lives.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Puppet with a happy face
- Puppet with a sad face
- Marker
- Chart paper

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Using the two puppets, explain to students the difference between optimistic and pessimistic people.

Say:

When people who are optimistic encounter a problem, they usually try to turn the problem into a positive thing. This means they try to see the good in the situation and think happy thoughts. While people who are pessimistic often become discouraged and frustrated when facing a problem. They only see the bad of the situation and think negative thoughts such as anger or sadness.

(Hold up the puppets) Which face shows the face of an optimistic person, someone who is thinking happy thoughts? This person feels hopeful about solving a problem.

Which face shows someone who is thinking unhappy thoughts? This person is a pessimistic person who gets discouraged by problems.

We can choose to be optimistic thinkers, we just have to see things from another perspective.

- Read out statements below, or create your own statements. Have students raise their hand if the statement shows optimistic thinking.

"I forgot my markers at home! Now I can't colour in the picture."

"I forgot my markers at home! I can borrow markers from someone else."

- Give another example such as: Jim said he would play soccer at recess with you today. When recess time came, Jim was playing basketball with Mike instead.

Think about the scenario we just imagined about Jim. Were you able to see both points of view?

- Have students answer what they would think if they were a pessimistic thinker. (Answers may be that Jim doesn't like them and doesn't want to play soccer, now they have no one to play with). Then ask students what they would think if they were an optimistic thinker. (Perhaps Jim forgot he said he would play soccer. They can go play basketball with him instead).

Let's create a list of ideas we can use to help us to be more optimistic and think happy. (Ideas may include looking at a problem from another perspective, reminding ourselves that a worry is a feeling that can pass, replacing a negative thought about something with a positive one.)

Curriculum Connection: This activity can be connected to Visual Arts. Pair students with a partner and place a number cube in front of each pair. Have pairs sit opposite the cube and ask them to draw the object from their own perspective. Then have them compare their drawings and perspectives. Ask them if the object looks the same in both drawings? What looks the same? What looks different?

(Adapted from The Hawn Foundation, 2011a)

Kindness and Compassion Activities

2.5 ACTIVITY: Kind Statements

OBJECTIVE:

This activity helps students to become aware of kind and positive statements they can say to each other.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Chart paper
- Marker

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Begin activity by having students gather in a circle in front your chart paper.

Say:

Has anyone ever come up to you and said a nice thing about you? How did you feel when you heard this? Do you ever go up to people and say nice things to them?

What are some examples of nice things we can say to each other in the classroom?

- Create a list of positive words and statements students can say to one another on the chart paper. (This list can include things such as; good morning, hello, how are you?, let's play together, you look nice today, can we work together?, you're really good at _____, I like the way you_____, etc.)
- Once the list is created, work together as a class to design a bulletin board where this list will be posted as "Positive Statements".

When you hear someone say one of these statements or any other positive statement or compliment, you can take a piece of paper and write it out and post it to this board. Each month we will take these compliments down and start over. Hopefully, each month our board will be more and more full as we get better at sharing positive compliments with each other.

(Adapted from Borba, 1989)

2.6 ACTIVITY: Secret Friendly Agent

OBJECTIVE:

To increase classroom positivism through student words and actions.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Badge (made out of construction paper that has letters “SA”)
- Paper and marker

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Begin activity by assigning one student to be the Secret Friendly Agent for the day. Inform them that their job is to:

- 1) Keep their job a secret from the other students and
- 2) To count the number of times their classmates say friendly/positive statements such as the ones on the Positive Statements bulletin board (see Kind Statements Activity 2.5 above).

Say:

There is a Secret Friendly Agent in our room today! This person is looking for people to say nice and positive statements to him/her. Our phrase of the day is _____. (Choose a phrase from the list of Positive Statements). Our Secret Friendly Agent is going to count how many times people say this statement to him/her, and once it is said 5 times he/she will reveal him/herself to us.

- Once the Secret Friendly Agent is revealed, give the SA badge to the student to wear for the rest of the day. The fifth person who greeted the student gets to write down the phrase and describe the situation in which they said the phrase on a piece of paper. Post this paper to the Positive Statements bulletin board as a reminder of how to be kind to one another.
- Assign a new Secret Friendly Agent the following day or week and choose a new positive statement.
- Students may enjoy introducing this activity to other classes and eventually making this a school-wide activity.

(Adapted from Borba, 1989)

2.7 ACTIVITY: Be A Bucket Filler!

OBJECTIVE:

This activity gets students thinking about the impact their own choices (words and actions) can impact others. Students will practice ways they can be kind to others by “filling each other’s buckets”.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Have You Filled A Bucket Today? by Carol McCloud
- Large sand bucket
- Garbage can
- Small buckets (one for each student)
- Paper
- Markers

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Begin activity by discussing what it means to be respectful and caring. Explain that we are going to be learning how to show respect and be caring each day at school. Show students the large sand bucket and ask students what they think it is and why it is here. Once students have become interested, read the story “Have You Filled a Bucket Today?” and ask questions throughout the story such as:

1. *Who carries an invisible bucket? Do each of you have an invisible bucket?*
2. *How do you know if someone is carrying a full or empty bucket?*
3. *What are some things you can do to fill someone’s bucket?*
4. *When you fill someone’s bucket how does that make you feel?*
5. *What does it mean to dip into someone else’s bucket? What happens to your bucket when you do this?*
6. *Would a bully be bucket dipper or bucket filler?*
7. *What can we do to make sure everyone here has a bucket that is full, not empty?*

After reading the book, invite students to sort behaviours as either “bucket fillers” or “bucket dippers”. (For example, asking someone to play with you is a bucket filler; calling someone a name is a bucket dipper). Have the students help you sort the “bucket fillers” into the large sand bucket, and the “bucket dippers” into the garbage can.

Hand out small buckets to each student and have them write their name on it. Encourage students to fill each other’s buckets by writing something nice, or a compliment, about another student.

Place the buckets at the front of the classroom and have students continue to fill each other’s buckets throughout the rest of the school year.

(Adapted from character.org)

2.8 ACTIVITY: What Are You Grateful For?

OBJECTIVE:

In this activity, students will learn to be grateful for the things in their lives.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Paper
- Pencil/pencil crayons

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Begin the activity by discussing the term gratitude.

Say:

What is gratitude? What does it mean to be grateful? We often forget all the things in our lives that we can be grateful for.

- Talk to students about how the sun has to keep rising every day to give life to the plants that we need to breath and to eat. Remind them about the people who clean the bathrooms we use, deliver the food to the store where we buy it, and the buildings in which we stay warm.

Close your eyes and picture one of your heroes, a person who makes you feel really happy. Imagine this person sitting right next to you and notice how this makes you feel. Now picture a few more special people and imagine them all sitting around you, looking at you with smiles. How does it feel to be surrounded by caring heroes?

Now picture your favourite food and imagine it is right here on your desk in front of you. Imagine the colours and smells of your favourite foods and notice what your body feels like as you do this.

Now think of all your favourite things, favourite people, everything that you are grateful for. How does it feel to recognize all the things you are grateful for?

Curriculum Connection: This activity can extend into a Visual Arts or Language Arts curriculum. Have students draw a picture of themselves surrounded by all the people for whom they are most grateful. Students can also write a list of their own aspects for which they are most grateful. Invite students to share what they wrote.

(Adapted from Rechtschaffen, 2016)

(3) Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision-Making

Teaching students the skills to communicate effectively and work together promotes effective problem-solving resulting in productive social and academic experiences.

There are several approaches to helping students build positive relationships and make responsible decisions such as focusing on Communication Skills, Cooperation and Conflict Resolution, and Community Building Activities.

Communication Activities

3.1 ACTIVITY: Finding The Star!

OBJECTIVE:

In this activity, students work together to find an object in the classroom by communicating with one another.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Star cut out of construction paper
- Marker

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Assign students a partner and have them write a positive complement (see Kind Statements Activity 2.5 for examples) about their partner on a paper star. Have Student #2 go outside the room while Student #1 hides the star for Student #2 somewhere in the room.

Student #2 must walk at least 10 feet away, then turn and face Student #1.

Say:

If you are Student #1 you must stay where you are and using only your words give your partner directions to finding their star from your perspective. Try to be very descriptive in your directions. For example, saying “take 5 steps to your right”, “take 1 step towards the garbage can”, is better than saying “go right.”

- Model the activity for students. Once Student #2 has found their star, have them switch roles so Student #1 has to look for their star.

What was it like to be the person giving directions?

What was it like to be the person receiving the directions?

What was the hardest part of this activity?

What did you learn about communicating during this activity?

(Adapted from centervention.com)

3.2 ACTIVITY: The Message Game

OBJECTIVE:

Students will learn to recognize that we communicate with both our words and with our bodies. It is important to be aware of both while we are trying to convey a message. Sometimes the message gets changed when we do not use our words or bodies effectively.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- None

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Begin by having the students line up next to each other. Stand at the front of the line and whisper a phrase into the first student's ear. This student must whisper the phrase into the next student's ear until it reaches the last student in line. The last student should say the phrase out loud and see if the phrase matches the original. If the phrase has changed, ask the students why they think the phrase has been changed. Continue to play this game for a few more rounds, having students switch places in line between rounds.

Once students have played a few rounds, discuss that when we are communicating we must be very clear with how we are speaking and if we are getting the information straight from the source (in this case the teacher). Sometimes the message gets changed when we do not communicate effectively, or hear the message from a different source.

Say:

We are going to play this game again, except this time there is no speaking. You must use your body to pass on a body expression to each other.

- Have the students line up and face the same way. Tap the first student on the shoulder, and when turned around, express an emotion with only body language (such as arms crossed and an angry face). This student should then tap the person beside and imitate the body language. Remind students that they cannot turn around until tapped. Continue until the last student in line sees the body language and demonstrates what was seen. Ask the students what emotion was demonstrated. Continue to play this game for a few more rounds, having students switch places in line between rounds.

What did you notice about the first activity when we used words? What did you notice about the second activity when we used our body language? Why do you think it is important to use both our words and bodies when we communicate?

Explain that what we say and how we say it is called communication. Communication can be verbal, when we use our words, or nonverbal, when we use facial expressions and body language. So it is important to be aware of both what we say and how we say it when we are communicating with others.

(Adapted from centervention.com)

3.3 ACTIVITY: I Am An Active Listener!

OBJECTIVE:

Students learn how to actively listen during a conversation. They are given the opportunity to practice listening to another's conversation and use their body language to demonstrate their listening skills.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- None

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Explain that people communicate to share ideas, express feelings, and get advice. Good communication occurs when people know they are being listened to and heard.

Say:

What are some ways you can use your body to demonstrate that you are listening to someone?

- Work with students to create a list of ways of using the body to show another person that they are listening. Some things to include on the list may be: making eye contact, nodding your head, smiling, leaning forward.
- Divide students into groups of three: assign one student as the “listener”, one as the “speaker”, and one as the “observer”. The observers watch the listeners, looking to see how they are using their bodies to show that they are listening. Observers also watch the speaker to see if they are reacting to how they are being listened to.

We are going to practice active listening and using our bodies to show that we are listening.

- Once students have had a chance to practice communicating and active listening, ask students what they noticed throughout the activity.

As observers, how was the body used to show that they were listening?

As listeners, what was it like to listen in this way? Was it easier to pay attention to what was being said?

As speakers, what was it like to be listened to in this way? Did it make you more eager to tell your story?

(Adapted from Lewkowicz, 2007).

3.4 ACTIVITY: Giving Feedback

OBJECTIVE:

Students use their active listening skills to practice giving feedback during conversations.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- None

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Remind students that people communicate to share ideas, express feelings, and get advice. Good communication occurs when people know they are being listened to and heard. Part of being a good listener is giving feedback.

Say:

When someone is talking to you, it feels nice to know they are paying attention to what you are saying. We already learned that you can show you are listening by using your body. Another way you can show that you are listening is by giving feedback throughout the conversation.

Giving feedback means briefly repeating the facts of what the person has just said, without giving your own opinions or advice. For example, if the speaker said, “Last week I went to soccer practice, but I forgot my team jersey,” feedback from the listener might be, “You didn’t have your team jersey last week?”

Feedback is not giving an opinion such as, “You really shouldn’t have forgotten your team jersey,” or give advice such as, “Next time you should leave your team jersey by the door.” Feedback is just repeating back the facts that were given.

We are going to practice active listening and giving feedback to show that we are listening.

- Divide students into groups of three; assign one student as the “listener”, one as the “speaker”, and one as the “observer”. Students practice having conversations with each other. Listeners, actively listen to a brief story from the speaker and then give the speaker feedback about what was heard. The observers listen to hear if the listener is giving feedback or giving opinion or advice. The observer also watches the speaker to see the reaction to the feedback.
- Once students have had a chance to practice communicating and giving feedback, ask students what they noticed throughout the activity.

As listeners, was it difficult or easy to give feedback about the facts and not give advice or opinion? Were you able to understand more or less what was being said?

As speakers, what was it like to hear the feedback about what you said? Did you feel that you were being heard?

As observers, what was it like to watch these conversations?

(Adapted from Lewkowicz, 2007).

Cooperation and Conflict Resolution Activities

3.5 ACTIVITY: Pass The Rope

OBJECTIVE:

In this activity students work as a group to accomplish a task. They must communicate and share their ideas with one another to pass a rope to one another in the most effective way possible.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Rope with the ends tied together to make a circle

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Divide students into three different groups. Instruct each group to form a circle and hold hands. Explain that they must not let go of each other's hands during the activity.

Say:

Your job is to move the rope from one person in the circle to the next and all the way back to the beginning by each of you taking a turn to step through the rope. The trick is to do this without letting go of each other's hands. Try to use your communication skills to help your classmates as they attempt to get through the rope and pass it on to you.

- Have students do this a few times, see which group can move the rope back to the starting point the fastest.

*How did you work together with the people in your group to pass the rope along?
What strategies did you find that worked the best in your group?
What were the other members of your group doing when the rope was being passed to you?*

Explain that communicating, encouraging each other, and working together helps to accomplish goals. It is important to listen to other's suggestions and work as a group to solve problems.

Curriculum Connection: This activity links to physical education. Students are encouraged to be aware of their bodies and use hand-eye coordination as they complete the task.

(Adapted from Hughes, 2003)

3.6 ACTIVITY: Musical Circles

OBJECTIVE:

Students learn to work together to achieve the goal of fitting as many students in as few circles as possible. Students learn the importance of cooperation when it comes to reaching goals.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Chalk
- Music

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

In a large concrete area, such as outside tarmac, draw about 25 circles in chalk (about 1 meter wide) spread out on the tarmac. Instruct students that when the music begins they must move around the area; when the music stops, they must stand inside a circle (more than one student in a circle is allowed).

Each time you stop the music, cross off some circles. The students must work together to make sure everyone is inside the circle once the music stops. This becomes more difficult as there are just a few circles left. See the lowest number of circles the class can get down to so that everyone is included.

Say:

What were some strategies you learned to help make sure everyone was inside a circle during this activity?

How did you work together making sure no one was left out?

How did you feel when you were invited to join in on an almost full circle?

Explain that by working together, students are able to be more successful in reaching their goals. This is why cooperation is important, everyone has their own ideas and working together is the best way to find the solution to a problem.

Curriculum Connection: This activity links to physical education. Students are encouraged to be physically active, moving around the area and become aware of their bodies.

(Adapted from Hughes, 2003)

3.7 ACTIVITY: Learning To Negotiate

OBJECTIVE:

In this activity students learn to negotiate by examining different scenarios that they may be faced with and practice coming up with solutions that leaves everyone happy.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- The Process for Effective Negotiation (see below)

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Say:

People do not always agree on things, sometimes one person wants one thing, and another wants something else. To avoid arguments and make everyone happy, we need to negotiate to come up with a solution where everyone is happy in some way.

The Process for Effective Negotiation:

1. *Share your opinion clearly.*
2. *Start a dialogue about possible solutions.*
3. *Give feedback.*
4. *Agree on a solution and follow it through.*

Place students in pairs and provide a list of situations that they must negotiate. Students must take opposite sides and come up with solutions that might leave everyone happy. Situations to negotiate about include:

- Both wanting the same toy.
- One friend wanting to play outside but the other wants to stay inside.
- Wanting to go for a swim but the other wants to read a book.

Once students have practiced negotiating have students discuss how they felt.

While discussing your ideas for a possible solution, did either of you try to use manipulation to convince your classmate, or did you both clearly express your different opinions?

Was the feedback you gave based on your own opinion or did you use facts to support your side?

Were the solutions expressed in the dialogue fair to both people, or did they support one person more than the other?

What could have made the negotiating work even better?

In what situations in school could you use the skill of negotiating?

(Adapted from Lewkowicz, 2007)

3.8 ACTIVITY: Working Together To Find A Solution

OBJECTIVE:

In this activity, students practice working together to solve a problem while ensuring that everyone is happy with the outcome.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Ira Sleeps Over by Bernard Waber (or any book with a conflict and solution format)

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Read the book to the entire class, but only read the part of the book that shares the character's problem. Inform students that they must work together to come up with a solution to the story.

Place students in groups of 4 and have them create a skit for their solution to the story. Students must all have a role. Once students have performed their skit, ask them the following questions:

Say:

How did you all work together to figure out a solution?

Were there a variety of solutions you considered in your group?

Did you all agree on the solution right away?

How did you figure out who was saying what in your skit?

- Emphasize the importance of listening to others' ideas and considering the feelings of others when solving problems in a group.
- Finish reading the story.

Was your solution the same as the characters in the story? Were there any differences between your solution and the characters? If your solution is different, do you think your solution is better than what happened in the story?

Discuss how there are often multiple solutions to a problem, no one solution is better than the other, however, it is important to make sure everyone is happy and work together to solve a problem.

Curriculum Connection: This activity links to the Dramatic Arts where students have to work together to create a scene and factor in the emotions of the characters as they act out their skit.

Community Building Activities

3.9 ACTIVITY: Creating Caring Classrooms

OBJECTIVE:

In this activity, students begin to take responsibility for their learning space. They help to plan and work together to create a caring classroom for all students.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Chart paper
- Marker

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Begin by asking students what rules they think they should have for learning in this classroom. Examples of rules may be: ask questions, listen to others when they are speaking, be friendly, share our feelings, get help, etc. Write these rules on a piece of chart paper. All students and the teacher sign the document and post it on the classroom wall for all to see.

Say:

These are our rules that we all agreed will make our classroom a nice place to be. Therefore, we have to remember to respect one another and follow these rules throughout the year.

Another way to make our classroom a welcoming place is to keep it tidy and help each other. We are going to share different jobs to take care of the classroom. What are some jobs we need to take care of our classroom?

- Help students create a list of jobs. Jobs may include:

Pencil Helpers (pencil sharpener)

Paper Helpers (paper passers)

Homework Helpers (record homework on board, pass out school memos)

Door Holder (holds door open for class)

Line Leader (leads the line and sets the example)

Board Helper (erases chalk or dry erase boards)

I know there are some jobs that you would prefer to do over others. You are going to get the chance to fill out job applications for the positions you would prefer. I will select a student for each role based on your applications and we will switch jobs every month.

- Post the classroom job list on a bulletin. Emphasize the importance of working together to create a positive shared space to come to learn everyday. By creating the rules together and applying for the different

jobs, students get to be part of taking care of their learning community. They develop a sense of student ownership and self-discipline.

(Adapted from Freiberg, 1996)

3.10 ACTIVITY: Getting To Know You

OBJECTIVE:

In this activity students are given the opportunity to learn more about their classmates. They practice interviewing one another to develop a better understanding for one another's likes and interests.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Chart paper
- Markers
- Construction paper

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

This lesson is great for the beginning of the year in helping students to get to know one another better.

Have the students help you come up with a list of interview questions for getting to know more about a person. Questions may include: "How many brothers and/or sisters do you have?", "Do you have any pets?", "What is your favourite subject?", etc.

Say:

Today our classroom is turning into a talk show! You are going to use some of the questions we came up with to interview your partner for 2 minutes. Try to find out something interesting or unique about your partner because you only have 30 seconds to introduce them to us before conducting your interview again in front of us. A 30 second introduction might sound like: "My guest today is _____, top leading baker in all of Ontario, and number one fan in the Taylor Swift club. One of the most interesting things about _____ is that she practices the piano for 2 hours everyday and bakes a dessert for her family dinners every Sunday! Please join me in welcoming _____ to today's show!"

- Assign students a partner. Allow the students time to copy down between 5-10 questions they would like to ask during their interview of their partner then have the first half of the pair conduct their interviews for about 5 minutes. Have the interviewer and interviewee switch roles and repeat the process.
- Once finished interviewing each other, ask the students to introduce their partner to the rest of the class on their talk show.

When you were the host, how did you decide what things about your partner to announce?

What did you find in common with your partner? With other classmates?

Were you surprised about any of the answers your partner gave?

Curriculum Connection: This activity is linked to Language Arts where students are practicing using listening and speaking strategies. This activity can also be extended into a Visual Arts lesson. Have the pairs of students draw each other's names in large block letters on a piece of paper. They must then fill in their partner's letters with images or words that represent them. Display student work on a bulletin board to remind students of their different personalities throughout the year.

(Adapted from Borba, 1989; O'Brien, n.d.)

3.11 ACTIVITY: Respecting Others

OBJECTIVE:

Students are reminded about respecting one another when playing games and are given the opportunity to practice being saying nice things to one another.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Chart paper
- Marker
- Scissors

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

When we are playing a game, following the rules and being fair shows our friends that we respect them.

Say:

What are some games you play in the classroom or outside at school? What are the rules for some of those games?

Are there things you like to hear your friends say to you when you are playing these games? For example, your friend might tell you “Good try” when you tried to shoot the ball in the net playing soccer and almost got it in. What are some more things you enjoy hearing?

- Create a list of things they like to hear their friends say when playing.

Are there sometime things you don’t like hearing your friends say when you are playing?

- Create a list and have students help you cut up the list and throw it in the garbage can, reminding them that we want to stop saying disrespectful words.

When you go out for recess today I want you to try saying a few nice things when playing with your friends.

- When students come back in from recess, discuss the positive statements they heard and said during their games.

(Adapted from Burch, 2003)

3.12 ACTIVITY: Special Places, Special People

OBJECTIVE:

Students will share places that are special to them or their families. They will discover what the different places have in common with one another and learn to recognize the classroom as a special place as well.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- None

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Say:

We all come from somewhere. We may be from a different street, different city, different country.

- Share several stories of places that are important to you. Provide various examples that include places in nature, buildings, schools, cities, provinces, so that students from various socioeconomic situations are able to relate.

I want you to think of some places that are important to you or your family.

- Walk around the room providing prompts to get students thinking, such as: “Where do you like to travel with your family?”, “Are there objects in your home from a certain place?”, “If you could live anywhere, where would you choose?”, “Which of these places is more important to you?”, “Describe this place, the smell, colours.”, “What does this place say about you?”.
- Have students share their special place in small groups of four. Then have them switch groups and share again. Do this again until you feel students are comfortable sharing with one another.
- Ask a few students to share their special place with the entire class.

Did you notice things that all of our special places might have in common? (Students may suggest things such as, nature, family, place of birth, home country, etc.)

- Ask students to come up with a general statement that describes how these different places say something about the class as a whole.

- Have students bring in pictures of them in their favourite place. Post this on a bulletin in the classroom helping to portray the classroom as another special place that they all have in common.

(Adapted from Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017)

Section Three

Additional Resources

This section is comprised of additional resources for educators, administrators, and parents wanting to learn more about SEL. These resources include children books, books for educators, websites on SEL and websites for workshops and programming in relation to SEL.

Books

Children Books

Below are suggested reading materials to engage children in developing social and emotional skills. Suggestions for the approximate age for reading the books are also listed. All book descriptions are adapted from www.amazon.ca.

Can You Be a Friend? by Nita Everly

Ages: 4-8

Jade is having her birthday party at a waterpark. But her new friend, Hannah, is in a wheelchair. Jade must make the decision to keep her party where she planned, or to make sure all her friends have fun. This story presents the idea of relationship building and explains that there are no limitations to friendship.

A Rainbow of Friends by P.K. Hallinan

Ages: 4-8

This heart-warming book explains that everyone is unique and adds on to the lives of others. This story encourages children to respect those who are different and reach out to those around them.

It's Okay to Be Different by Todd Parr

Ages: 4-8

In this story, the important messages of acceptance, understanding, and confidence are examined. Children are encouraged to celebrate their individuality through acceptance of others.

Sometimes I Feel Like a Storm Cloud by Lezlie Evans

Ages: 4-8

A child describes the many emotions she experiences throughout her daily activities.

When I Feel Sad by Cornelia Maude Spelman

Ages: 4-8

A little guinea pig describes the feelings of sadness when someone is cross or when something bad happens. Eventually she realizes that feeling sad does not last forever.

The Chocolate Covered Cookie Tantrum by Deborah Blumenthal

Ages: 4-8

Sophie wants a cookie when she is at the park but her mother will not give her one. She throws a tantrum when her mother will not give her what she wants.

When I Care About Others by Cornelia Maude Spelman

Ages: 4-10

The story begins by showing children that when they are sick, hurt, or unhappy, others care about them. It provides children with the idea that sometimes others need to be cared about as well.

Talk and Work it Out by Cheri Meiners

Ages: 4-10

This book teaches children the process for solving problems between people. They learn that solving problems involves calming themselves, stating the problem, listening, thinking of solutions, trying one of them, evaluating the results, and even agreeing to disagree when no solution is possible.

Today I Feel Silly & Other Moods That Make My Day by Jamie Lee Curtis

Ages: 4-10

Through this zany book, children explore, identify, and learn to have fun with their changing moods.

What If Everybody Did That? by Ellen Javernick

Ages: 8-12

This story uses humorous illustrations to demonstrate what the world would be like if no one followed rules. Children learn the consequences of thoughtless behaviour and why the world is a better place when everyone obeys the rules.

The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes

Ages: 8-12

Wanda Petronski is a Polish girl in an American school. She wears the same faded blue dress to school everyday but claims she has 100 dresses at home. Everyone bullies her until she is pulled out of school. The class feels terrible for what they did and decide that they need to speak up when others are being bullied. This tale demonstrates the power of a community within the classroom and the importance of making everyone feel like they belong.

Books for Educators and Parents

Below are further reading materials for both educators and parents wanting to learn more about SEL or wanting to find more SEL activities for children. All book descriptions are adapted from www.amazon.ca

Educating Minds and Hearts: Social Emotional Learning and the Passage into Adolescence by Jonathan Cohen

This book describes the range of programs and perspectives that teachers, counsellors, and administrators can use to promote social-emotional education in today's schools. It provides strategies and perspectives of integrating SEL into school life and outside of the classroom. The focus is on helping students develop conflict resolution, self-esteem, and appropriate behaviour in the classroom, as well as helping educators develop these skills themselves.

Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning: Research and Practice

by Joseph A. Durlak, Celene E. Domitrovich, Thomas P. Gullotta, Roger P. Weissberg
Conceptual and scientific underpinnings are used to examine the relationship between SEL and academic success and mental health. Issues in implementing and assessing SEL programs in diverse educational settings are analyzed in depth.

Social and Emotional Learning in the Classroom: Promoting Mental Health and Academic Success

by Kenneth W. Merrell & Barbara A. Guedner

Numerous examples are provided to illustrate how to support students' mental health, behaviour, and academic performance. The focus is on guiding educators and administrators on how to choose the right SEL program for a particular school; teach SEL concepts to students, teachers, and administrators; integrate SEL into the curriculum; and monitor the success of SEL interventions.

Activities for Building Character and Social-Emotional Learning: Grades 6-8

by Katia S. Petersen

A guide to building attitudes of respect and caring, reduce problem behaviours, empower students to solve problems, and educate the whole child. The 100 plus, easy to implement, year-round activities, are easily integrated into the daily curriculum in all subject areas.

Thinking, Feeling, Behaving: An Emotional Education Curriculum for Adolescents: Grades 1-6; Grades 7-12

by Ann Vernon

An easy-to-use curriculum that helps students to overcome irrational beliefs, negative feelings and attitudes, and the negative consequences that may result. The two volumes - one for grades 1-6 and one for grades 7-12 contain 90 field-tested activities. These activities include simulation games, stories, role-plays, written activities, brainstorming, and art activities.

Online Resources

Websites on SEL

Searching for the term Social and Emotional Learning on Google will result in a huge list of online sources. To narrow it down, a list of well-known websites often referenced in academic writing are provided below. These websites can be used as additional tools for implementing social and emotional learning within the classroom. Under each link is a brief description taken directly from each of the websites.

Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

www.casel.org

CASEL provides a unique combination of research, practice, and policy to support high-quality social and emotional learning in districts and schools nationwide. Leaders of the Chicago-based non-profit organization catalyzed the collaboration that defined the field more than 20 years ago. Now, working closely with educators, researchers, policymakers, community leaders, families, and students, we are turning this momentum into a movement.

Character Education Partnership

www.character.org

Character Education Partnership is a non-profit that works with schools, districts and organizations to develop a culture where young people thrive both academically and ethically. We provide the tools, methods and strategies that educators, parents, community members and workplaces need to create caring and productive environments.

Edutopia: Social-Emotional-Learning

www.edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning

A comprehensive website and online community that increases knowledge, sharing, and adoption of what works in K-12 education...Find and share resources for creating a healthy school culture by helping students develop skills to manage their emotions, resolve conflicts, and make responsible decisions.

Every Moment Counts

www.everymomentcounts.org

Every Moment Counts is a mental health promotion initiative developed to help all children and youth become mentally healthy in order to succeed in school, at home and in the community.

This work, developed by occupational therapists, focuses on reframing mental health as a positive state of functioning – mental health is more than the absence of mental

illness...Model programs and toolkits have been developed emphasizing embedded strategies to help all children and youth enjoy participation throughout the day and cope with challenges.

MindUP

www.mindup.org

MindUP is a teaching framework, science centric and evidence based. It is grounded in neuroscience, positive psychology, mindful awareness and social and emotional learning. MindUP has 15 lessons that are brought to life by a teacher in the classroom, providing an immersive discovery experience along with daily practices. MindUp drives positive behaviour - improves learning and scholastic performance while increasing empathy, optimism and compassion.

Websites for Workshops and Programming

Below are websites for educators and parents wanting to take part in workshops or programs that promote Social and Emotional Learning.

Institute for Social and Emotional Learning

www.instituteforsel.org

This program offers four-day summer workshops for K-12 teachers, administrators, and counsellors on how to bring SEL to their own school communities. They also design and lead a one-year Path program each year. This Path program integrates SEL into the education system of six different schools and is based on each school's individual needs.

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility

www.morningsidecenter.org

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility provides evidence-based programs to help all members of the school community (students, school staff, parents). Schools are able to contact Morningside Center to implement a wide selection of programs that focus on fostering students' social, emotional, and academic learning. Some of the types of programs offered include: classroom instruction programs; school-wide programs; student leadership programs; after-school programs; and stand-alone workshops.

Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)

<http://www.pathstraining.com/>

An elementary school curriculum that promotes peaceful conflict resolution, emotion regulation, empathy and responsible decision-making for children in preschool through Grade 6. Teachers are given detailed scripts, guidelines for implementing the lessons, and suggestions for parental involvement.

Responsive Classroom

www.responsiveclassroom.org

Responsive Classroom uses an evidence-based teaching approach for elementary and middle school learning. There are a variety of workshops and professional development opportunities offered for elementary and middle schools worldwide.

Six Seconds

www.6seconds.org

Six Seconds' Center for Social Emotional Learning offers the following for companies, schools, business leaders, and individuals: assessments for students, teacher, and schools; training and professional development including free online courses; grants and research support; and resources on Social and Emotional Learning.

The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)

<http://www.sealcommunity.org/>

A whole-school approach executed in three ‘waves of intervention’ that focuses on promoting the social and emotional skills that are necessary for learning, positive behaviour, regular attendance, and emotional well-being. The SEAL program is intended as a preventive measure in reducing student behavioural issues and is designed as a supplement, not replacement, for what schools are already doing to promote social, emotional and behavioural skills.

The 4Rs Program (Reading, Writing, Respect, and Resolution)

<http://www.morningsidecenter.org/4rs-program>

An interactive literacy curriculum where students engage in reading, writing, discussion, and skills practice to foster caring, responsible behaviour. Teachers are given training and provided with ongoing support and resources, which include read-alouds, book talks, and interactive skills lessons that build upon one another to help develop social and emotional skills related to understanding and managing feelings, listening, developing empathy, solving conflicts non-violently, honouring diversity, and standing up to bullying.

Teaching Heart Institute

www.teachingheartinstitute.com

The institute provides presentations, teacher credited workshops, parent workshops, therapy, and consultations on the development of the Social and Emotional Intelligence of students, teachers, and parents around the world.

~~~~~*Helpful Notes*~~~~~

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## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the lessons learned in completing this project, several limitations, and lists the next steps following the completion of the project.

The main purpose of this project was to develop an easy-to-use handbook for Canadian elementary school teachers to help improve the social and emotional well-being of students, and in doing so, improve student academic abilities. *A Beginner's Guide to Teaching Social and Emotional Learning: A Handbook for Teachers, Administrators, and Parents* provides information about the benefits of SEL and promotes a positive school environment that benefits all students. This handbook also introduces teachers, administrators, and parents to activities for implementing SEL into their daily routine. Additional resources are also included for teachers, administrators, or parents who want to find out more information about the benefits of SEL and/or are looking for additional SEL activities, programs, and professional training opportunities.

### Lessons Learned

Through my research on social and emotional learning, I have learned that teachers should be supporting students in both academics and personal skills. SEL is important for all students and can easily be implemented into the classroom curriculum; however, it is not as present as I believe it should be in schools. School faculties tend to believe they are too busy to focus on SEL, while others believe they do not have the time or money to send their teachers for SEL training (Durlak et al., 2011; Hawkins et al., 2004). Multiple examples of successful SEL programs, such as SEAL, The 4Rs Program, PATHS, and The SEAK Project, were provided in the literature (Morningside Center, 2016; PATHS, 2016; SEAK Project, 2013; Wigelsworth et al., 2012). There are many

resources available for implementing SEL; however, teachers need to take time to review these resources and see if they fit the needs of their students, and their own needs. From this literature, I have learned there are simple strategies that can be used on a daily basis to promote social and emotional skills. This handbook presents these strategies, and it is through the use of this handbook that I hope teachers will better understand the positive impact of SEL on their students, and on themselves as well.

### **Limitations of the Project**

While the purpose of this project was to examine current research on SEL and the strategies suggested for educators to better foster SEL to support academic achievement in the classroom, there are a few limitations. One limitation of this project is in the creation of the handbook and the fact that it was not professionally peer reviewed by experts in the educational field. This means that the handbook may not be considered a valid resource as it may not meet the standards of quality. Given more time on this project, I would elect a panel of educational experts to review and assess this handbook.

This leads to the second limitations of the project, which is the lack of field testing of the handbook. I would have liked to ask teachers to implement this handbook in their classrooms for an extended period of time, preferably starting at the beginning of the school year. I would have liked to interview them periodically throughout the year to hear about the effectiveness of the handbook and evaluate any concerns. I would have also liked to ask parents to use the activities in this handbook with their children at home, meeting with them periodically throughout the year as well. This would provide me with the opportunity to note the strengths of the handbook and any issues that need to be addressed in order to make the handbook more effective in supporting SEL.



### **Next Steps**

To ensure that the handbook is a successful product of this project, there are several steps that need to be done. The first step would be to promote the use of this handbook with teachers. I would do this by recommending it to my colleagues at my school board to help increase their knowledge and understanding of SEL. If colleagues are willing to use this handbook, they can offer feedback on its usefulness and shortcomings, thereby, addressing the second limitation of this project.

The next step would be to promote the use of this handbook with other school personnel, which includes school psychologists, special educators, and counsellors. The handbook would be an additional resource in spreading the word about the impact of SEL on students and hopefully encourage SEL to be integrated more into classrooms.

The final step would be to encourage professional development about SEL and the positive impact it has on student learning and the entire school community. The goal of this project was to provide educators with strategies to better foster SEL in their classrooms. Providing educators with professional development opportunities in addition to the handbook would further support this goal.

### **Concluding Comments**

Ongoing research continues to confirm the importance of SEL for the development of the well-being of students both academically and socioemotionally. By bringing SEL activities in the classroom, we are able to help students develop the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills they need to achieve success now and in the future. This handbook is intended to be an easy-to-implement educational resource that promotes SEL skills. These skills are necessary for the well-being of all students who may

otherwise not reach their full potential due to challenges in identifying and recognizing emotions of themselves and others, making responsible decisions, and developing positive relationships. It is the hope that this project will encourage more educators and schools to implement SEL into the classroom curriculum.

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